

Somali military leader shot dead

MOGADISHU (R) — A prominent Somali military leader, Colonel Bashir Ali Salari Bilig, has been shot dead near the Kenyan border in western Somalia, members of his Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM) said on Saturday. He was related to a minister in the government of former President Mohammad Siad Barre, now in exile in Nigeria, and was involved in recent fighting for the port of Kismayu in southern Somalia. Somali sources suggested that his shooting could have been evidence of a split in the SPM leadership after the group was forced out of Kismayu by forces loyal to United Somali Congress (USC) leader Mohammad Farah Aidede.

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U.N. imposes sanctions on Serb-led Yugoslavia

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — The Security Council, ignoring an eleven-hour appeal for a reprieve, imposed sweeping sanctions against the Serb-led Yugoslav state on Saturday. The nations of the world joined forces to choke the Belgrade government, accused of sparking Europe's bloodiest fighting and biggest flight of refugees since World War II. The U.N. Security Council put Serbia and Montenegro, its only sister republic in what remains of the Yugoslav Federation, in the same league as Iraq and Libya in facing worldwide condemnation and sweeping economic sanctions. The vote was 13 in favour and none against, with abstentions by Zimbabwe and China. Most Council members hope the sanctions contained in Security Council Resolution 757 will force Serbia and Montenegro to agree to a ceasefire in the latest and bloodiest Yugoslavia battlefield, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

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Prince Hassan visits Durham

LONDON (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Friday visited Durham University and met with the university president and members of its teaching staff. Prince Hassan also visited the University's Foreign Studies Centre and the Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies Centre. Prince Hassan met with officials and students at the two centres and discussed with them scopes of cooperation between Durham University and Jordanian Universities. Prince Hassan also delivered a lecture on the current situation in the Middle East peace process.

Maghreb summit postponed — diplomats

RABAT (R) — A summit of the five-nation Arab Maghreb Union scheduled for this month has been postponed indefinitely because of domestic problems in member states, according to diplomats. The union, founded in February 1989 to establish a common market between Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, has been beset with problems from the start. The last Maghreb summit was held in Casablanca in September. No new date has been set, but Mauritania hands the rotating six-month presidency to Tunisia next month. The diplomats said domestic problems in Algeria, where a state of emergency is in force, Libya's dispute with the West over airliner bombings, and forthcoming elections in Morocco were among reasons for the postponement.

4 Italians die in plane crash in Tunisia

TUNIS (R) — Four Italians taking part in an international light aircraft rally were killed when their plane crashed in flames near the Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid, aviation sources said on Saturday. The three men and one woman, who crashed on Friday, were one of 53 international teams taking part in the rally. The cause of the crash was not immediately known but the sources said an investigation had begun. They had no further details.

Passengers flee Turkish ferry fire

ISTANBUL (R) — Passengers on a Turkish ferry fled for their lives overnight and one crew member died of a heart attack after a fire broke out in an engine and flames spread, the semi-official Anatolia news agency reported. Rescued passengers said on arrival in Istanbul that only one of the ship's lifeboats was seaworthy and that but for a passing Romanian cargo ship many would have perished. Captain Muammer Bezirci told Anatolia all 299 passengers and all but one of the crew of the ferry Istanbul were safely transferred to other ships after the fire broke out in the Marman Sea late on Friday. Romanian cargo ship Tusnad rescued 214 passengers and took them back to the city of Istanbul. The Turkish ships took the remaining passengers and crew to Canakkale in the Dardanelles and the town of Bandirma.

Pyeongyang said readying new missile

WASHINGTON (AP) — North Korea is preparing to sell a new intermediate-range missile to Middle East countries, a senior State Department official said Friday night. The missile "would be very, very destabilising if it were introduced into the region," the official said. "And yet it appears that is the intention of North Korea." North Korea has been exporting Scud missiles to the Middle East and is now signing up buyers in the region for the new missile, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. Syria and Iraq have previously bought North Korean missiles. The official said U.S. experts are calling the missile the "No Dong" after a North Korean cape where the missile is being test fired. The non-nuclear missile has a range of 1,000 to 1,050 kilometres, he said.

Arafat in Syria for Mideast talks

DAMASCUS (Agencies) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat arrived on a rare visit to Syria on Saturday to discuss the slow pace of U.S.-sponsored Arab-Israeli peace talks, Palestinian officials said.

They said Mr. Arafat would also discuss with Syrian President Hafez Al Assad Israeli repression in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip and Israeli incursions in southern Lebanon.

After years of animosity, Mr. Arafat and Mr. Assad agreed to resume normal ties during a meeting in Damascus shortly after both endorsed in Arab-Israeli peace talks which began in Madrid late last year.

The Tunisian Liberation Organisation (PLO) chairman said in Sanza on Thursday that Arab leaders needed a joint evaluation of their performance at the peace talks.

Syria has boycotted the multilateral peace talks, citing lack of progress in bilateral discussions on Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories.

The PLO, which is playing an offstage role guiding Palestinian delegates, has given its blessing to the talks.

The Tunis-based PLO officials said the slow progress in peace talks would be discussed at a meeting in Amman on June 3 by the foreign ministers of Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, as well as the PLO's Political Department head, Farouk Kaddoumi.

Mr. Kaddoumi met Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al Sharaf in Damascus on Friday to prepare for Mr. Arafat's visit, they said.

Warning to Israel

In Sanza, a top aide to Mr. Arafat warned Israel on Saturday Palestinians would respond with violent acts following a clamp-

down on the occupied Gaza Strip.

Bassam Abu Sharif said Israel's order barring Gaza Palestinians from entering the Jewish state until further notice subjected them to "starvation and organised terrorism away from the eyes of the media."

"We warn that Israeli practices will certainly trigger violent acts in response to the Israeli terrorism," he told a news conference in Sanza. He gave no details of what action the Palestinians would take.

Israel closed the Gaza Strip after the stabbing of a Jewish girl near Tel Aviv last week. Thousands of Gaza's 750,000 population depend on work inside Israel.

"The Palestinians' patience has a limit. The West and the United Nations must not expect the Palestinians to tolerate this oppression any longer," Mr. Abu Sharif said.

The PLO official urged the United States and Russia, members of the United Nations Security Council and co-sponsors of Arab-Israeli peace talks, to arrange U.N. protection for Palestinians in the occupied territories.

Rabin's pledge

Labour Party leader Yitzhak Rabin has promised to take "more serious approach" to Middle East peace talks if he is elected prime minister.

Standing by the old walled city near the spot where soldiers occupied East Jerusalem in the 1967 war, Mr. Rabin also intoned those were moments "none of us will forget as long as we live."

For Mr. Rabin, 70, his role as army chief of staff in that war is an important asset for the June 23 elections when he tries to unseat

(Continued on page 5)

Israeli army says guard shot dead in Eilat attack

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Two Palestinian commandos shot dead an Israeli security guard in the Israeli resort of Eilat on Saturday after allegedly swimming along the Red Sea coast.

The army said soldiers shot dead one infiltrator and wounded another in the raid on the eve of the anniversary of Israel's seizure of Arab East Jerusalem in the 1967 Middle East war.

Army chief Ehud Barak said it was unclear who was behind the attack but asserted Jordan should have prevented it.

"It is still not known who stands behind this incident. They are apparently Palestinians with a fundamentalist religious background," he told reporters in Eilat.

"We see Jordan as the accountable party that must make a supreme effort to prevent terrorist activities from its territory."

The guard at the popular coral beach marine observatory in Eilat

Israel keeps up pressure on Lebanese resistance

BEIRUT (Agencies) — Israel kept up pressure on guerrillas in South Lebanon Saturday, sending helicopters to monitor movements and lobbing shells at villages.

Tension was high a day after Israeli troops and tanks thrust out of their self-declared "security zone" in the south, seized a village and bulldozed houses in their drive to silence guerrillas.

The Israelis later withdrew from Armon, which lies 350 metres north of the zone.

Lebanon's new government, which won a vote of confidence, met to discuss how to rid the country of Israel's presence in the south.

Political sources said Prime Minister Rashid Al Solh would visit Damascus, the main power broker in Lebanon where it has 40,000 troops, in the next few days to seek Syria's help in solving the country's acute economic and political problems.

"The main task of the government will be fixing the economic situation... failing to do so will lead to even more problems in

the country," said Sakis Naoum, a columnist at the respected Al Nahar newspaper.

Mr. Solh's 24-man cabinet won a majority of votes in a two-day parliamentary session that ended late on Friday after he pledged to strengthen the Lebanese currency and to work to expel Israeli forces from the security zone (see page 2).

Guerrillas Saturday fired five mortar bombs at a joint post run by the Israelis and their local militia allies, the South Lebanon Army (SLA), in hills near the village of Braasheet on the op of Israel's self-styled "security zone."

Israeli and SLA gunners pounded the villages of Kafa and Tibnine, some three kilometres north of the zone, where guerrillas of Hizbollah are active, the sources added.

There was no immediate word on casualties in the attack or subsequent shelling.

Security sources said earlier Israeli helicopters dropped flames over the south during the night to monitor guerrilla movements.

King voices pride in national industries

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Saturday inaugurated a week-long exhibition of national industrial products and voiced deep pride in the national industry and his appreciation of Jordanian industrialists.

"We will pursue the road of construction with determination and resolve having our endeavours on solid scientific ground," the King said a statement after touring the various parts of the exhibition, organised at the Sahab Industrial City in cooperation with the Jordanian Industrial Estates Corporation (JIEC) and Jordanian firms.

"The good quality products I saw and inspected today give me the impression that we are able to attain the highest levels in industry and can compete with others in the same field," King Hussein said.

"We feel that we are advanced in industry thanks to the good spirit and the true determination and resolve on the part of the Jordanian people, who aim at further progress for Jordan and the Arab World at large," King Hussein said.

The King, accompanied by Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben

Shaker and Royal Court Chief Khaled Al Karaki, toured a number of factories which produce pharmaceutical products, television sets, clothes and carpets.

The King, who was welcomed to and accompanied on the tour by cabinet ministers, the JIEC director general, the governor of Amman, the mayor of Sahab and other officials, inspected items displayed at the site by 56 Jordanian industrial firms.

The exhibition displays electrical appliances, electronic devices, engineering equipment, chemicals, textiles, food and leather products, medicines, clothes, ceramics, wood work, furniture and medical equipment.

Also on display are television sets and refrigerators, cooking stoves, freezers, industrial tools and machinery, solar water heaters, plastic products, packaging equipment, rock wool, insulated wires and cables, fans, heaters and ducting systems, liquid and dry batteries, electrical switches and accessories, infant carriages, meters, clocks, household equipment, utensils, generators, transformers and distribution boards.

The King visited the Arah Cen-



His Majesty King Hussein Saturday tours a national industrial exhibition which he opened earlier (Photo by Yusef Al 'Allan)

tre for pharmaceutical Chemical Industries, which was set up in 1984 with a JD 5 million capital. He also visited the Gold Star industrial assembly plant which produces television sets, employing 250 people. It can produce up to 50,000 sets annually. The JD 5 million capital plant is 20 per cent owned by a Korean company. Production started last month.

The King also visited carpet companies.

The Sahab Industrial City, which was established in 1984, now houses 241 factories, of which 60 make goods for export. Nearly 7,000 workers are employed by the factories of the Sahab Industrial City.

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Workers elect new national leadership

By Odeh Odeh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Workers in Jordan Saturday elected a 17-member council to serve as a new leadership for the Kingdom's labour unions.

Two-hour election session held by 97 members of the central council ended with the election of Fawzi Dosso as chairman and Jamal Tamimi and Hassan Qadab as his two deputies.

The central council, which constitutes the workers parliament, also elected Khaled Shreim as secretary general of the Federation of Jordanian Labour Union (FJLU) and Mazen Maaita as his deputy.

Jordan's 800,000-strong workforce, which forms about 25 per cent of Jordan's population, hopes, that the new leadership will be able to tackle their numerous problems.

Participants in the meeting elected representatives of the 17 labour unions to the executive board of the federation.

Hazem Al Ahbadi was elected as representative of the Construction Workers Union, Ahmad Wanas as representative of the Municipal Workers Union, Fatahalla Inani as representative of the Spinning and Weaving Workers Union,

Haron Al Sbarani as representative of the Electricity Workers Union, Haidar Rashid as representative of the Banking Workers Union, Husni Abu Anwar as representative of the Ports Workers Union, Amin Al Ardan as representative of the Health Services Union, Abdul Rahim Hassan as representative of the Petrochemical Industries Union, Jamil Al Hababeb as representative of the Land Transport Workers and Mechanics Union, Obaid Khalifa as representative of the Printing Workers Union, Jamil Abdul Rahim as representative of Commercial Stores Workers Union, Ahmad Dabhan as representative of the Air Cargo Union, Hassan Awad as representative of the Food Industries Union, Khaled Shreim as representative of the Miners Union, and Mazen Al Maaitah as representative of the Special Education Union.

The new leadership is facing many problems that will not be solved except by the enactment of a new labour law, according to sources at the federation.

The new leadership will be facing problems such as the growing unemployment, low wages, the absence of health insurance for many workers and foreign workers in Jordan.

Renewed fighting in Kabul after attack on presidential plane

KABUL (Agencies) — Renegade rebels and a fierce militia loyal to the caretaker Islamic government battled with rockets and cannons Saturday following an attempt on President Sibghatullah Mojaddidi's life, officials said.

The fighting erupted between the radical Hezb-e-Islami faction of rebel chief Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and a northern militia headed by General Abdul Rashid Dostum in a suburb southeast of Kabul. It scuttled a six-day truce between the warring sides. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

"We were fighting to keep Hekmatyar's forces from entering Kabul," said Brigadier-General Mohammad Nawab, the militia commander who oversees the capital's security.

The renewed fighting followed

an attempt Friday to shoot down the plane bringing Mr. Mojaddidi and a 70-member entourage back from Pakistan.

Inspecting debris from the nosecone of the airliner, sheared off by a missile as the plane descended towards Kabul airport, military chiefs ruled out the possibility that it had been hit by the kind of random gunfire that has echoed around the city for weeks.

"This was pre-planned. It was not usual, and we will make sure it is not repeated," said Commander Mohammad Panah, an aide to new Defence Minister Ahmad Shah Masood, at the airport.

Mr. Mojaddidi, returning from a state visit to Pakistan, emerged ash-faced but unscathed from the plane Friday.

The elderly interim leader went ahead with a formal welcome ceremony before foreign diplomats and a military band after the attack.

Members of his more than 100-strong entourage on board with him described hearing a whine, seeing a flash and feeling the Soviet-built airliner shudder when it was less than 200 metres from the ground.

One pilot was injured but the other brought aircraft down safely.

The investigators — drawn from the Mujahedeen guerrillas, the former government air force and the Uzbek militia which controls the airport — said it was too early to say for certain what kind of weapon had hit the plane.

But some suggested it may have been a British-made Blowpipe missile, supplied to Mujahedeen guerrillas for use against

(Continued on page 5)

ANNOUNCEMENT

TO ALL OWNERS OF SATELLITE DISH SYSTEM/APPARATUS

The Ministry of Finance announces that all owners of Satellite Reception Dish System/Apparatus should settle their status with the Customs Department and other concerned authorities within the period from 15.5.1992 till 15.6.1992.

Contrary to this, the ministry will regrettably be forced to take all the necessary procedures in accordance with the applied laws and regulations in the ministry and other concerned authorities.

Minister of Finance

Solh cabinet wins vote of confidence

BEIRUT (Agencies) — Prime Minister Rashid Solh's newly formed government has won a vote of confidence from parliament, empowering it to seek ways of steering Lebanon out of its worst economic crisis in 48 years of independence.

Eighty-four members of the 108-seat house attended the 16-hour debate Friday over the government's policy statement put forward by Mr. Solh on Thursday.

Seventy-six parliamentarians voted for the government, five against it and three abstained.

Mr. Solh pledged to seek aid from the European Community, the International Monetary Fund and the Arab countries to rebuild Beirut's war-wrecked commercial centre.

But he did not say in the policy statement how he would go about luring foreign aid, which has eluded previous governments since the end almost two years ago of the civil war.

He also promised to confront Israel's occupation of a border strip in South Lebanon and take belt-tightening measures to shore up the sagging economy.

The government said it would adopt a belt-tightening policy to curb public spending, reduce a huge deficit in the projected budget and develop the tax collection system. The previous government was brought down by broad riots.

The Lebanese pound, once one of the strongest currencies in the Middle East, has lost more than half of its international value since February, forcing up prices by about 75 per cent and driving many Lebanese below the poverty level.

Mr. Solh's cabinet also pledged to supervise parliamentary elections, the first in Lebanon in 20 years, later this year.

The 24-mao cabinet was announced May 16, replacing that of Prime Minister Omar Karami which was forced out of office 10 days earlier amid nationwide riots against soaring prices that made living costs higher in peacetime than during the 1975-1990 war.

"My government shall adhere to the legitimate rights of the state and people to confront the



Rashid Solh

Israeli occupation and to strive with all means to liberate Lebanon's occupied territory," Mr. Solh said in his policy statement.

After the parliamentary vote, Mr. Solh said his government's top priority was to "liberate the south from Israeli occupation and will act on all levels to accomplish that goal."

"The government will also extend all available support to the steadfastness of the people to brave Israeli attacks and cling to their homes."

That pledge has been the standard stance of all previous governments since Israel carved out the so-called "security zone" in 1985.

Israel refuses to abandon the enclave until all irregular factions involved in a guerrilla warfare against it have been disarmed.

Israel and its surrogate militia, the South Lebanon Army (SLA), have been engaged in 11 days of confrontations with the Iranian-backed Hizbollah in the south.

Mr. Solh also pledged to respect the freedom of the press and uphold Lebanon's bank secrecy, which helped attract Arab and foreign capital and make Beirut the main financial centre in the Middle East before the civil war.

The 15-year conflict claimed more than 140,000 lives and wrecked an estimated \$25 billion worth of damage, mostly in Beirut's downtown centre.

Iraqi Kurds caught in Turkey-PKK crossfire

DURI, Iraqi (R) — Iraqi Kurds who fled their villages along the Turkish border are returning home to find themselves trapped by violence between separatist Kurds and Turkey.

In the latest incident, 12 Iraqi Kurdish families were attacked by Turkish planes on Wednesday hours after the United Nations had brought them to the ancient Christian village of Duri on the way back to their homes for the first time in 16 years.

Four people were killed and three wounded in the attack.

"We thought the border might be dangerous, but the United Nations and the Kurdistan Front encouraged us to come back," said Mohammad Hassan Heyran, 20.

Two of his nephews were killed as was his brother, a member of an Iraqi Kurdish border patrol contingent which came under fire from both the Turks and the guerrillas of the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK).

The PKK is seeking a separate state for Turkey's 10 million Kurds. More than 3,700 people have been killed during their eight-year guerrilla campaign.

PKK forces frequently launch attacks into Turkey from mountain sanctuaries inside northern Iraq. The Turks have retaliated with a series of cross-border raids since last August, sometimes killing and wounding Iraqi Kurdish civilians.

Wednesday's air raid on Duri

was launched after PKK forces struck a Turkish border village. Three days later, the Duri victims' personal belongings were still strewn across a flower-bedded meadow where they had been abandoned in terror.

A path of machinegun bullets was stitched across the ground. A few of Adil Pirnuz Abdullah's teeth still lay in the dirt next to the campfire where he and his wife were cooking breakfast when the Turkish planes struck.

Mr. Abdullah was hit in the face and his body peppered with wounds from bullet fragments and shattered rock. He and his wife, who has fragments in her chest cavity, are in hospital in Dohuk.

"We didn't expect them to shoot us," said Mr. Abdullah. "We waved our yellow banners so they would know we were KDP (Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party), not PKK ... the children were playing football."

Iraqi Kurdish leaders say the only way to establish a secure border with Turkey is to resettle the thousands of villages evacuated by Iraq in its long campaign to subdue the Kurds.

Huge swaths of northern Iraq along the Turkish and Iranian frontiers are currently uninhabited except for PKK guerrillas. Iraqi Kurds are eager to head home after years of wandering, but they want a guarantee of safety.

Palestinian education council appeals for urgent assistance

AMMAN (I.T.) — Palestinian universities have been subjected to the most cruel collective punishment when they were closed by the Israeli authorities for three to four consecutive years, according to the Council for Higher Education in Jerusalem.

Throughout that period, the council supported the efforts of Palestinian universities in their off campus teaching programme, to homes, mosques, churches, as well as in public and private institutions, where the goal was to protect the infrastructure from total collapse, a council statement said.

The universities managed to fulfil their duty, and the result was that 50 per cent of the original number of Palestinian university students actually participated in this programme, it said.

Following excerpts from the statement:

Now that the universities have reopened following a prolonged closure, Israeli military authorities are escalating their measures. Harassment of Palestinian universities includes the following actions:

— Palestinian students from the Gaza Strip who seek education at the West Bank universities are systematically harassed by Israeli occupation forces. This measure is extremely unfair, considering that West Bank universities are the only place where Gaza students are accepted without restrictions. Gaza students are immediately arrested if they are found in the West Bank. Soldiers can immediately identify students from the Gaza Strip because the latter carry distinctive identity papers.

Moreover, academic freedom is not guaranteed, because Gaza Students are denied the right to choose a university of their personal preference. Israeli harassment impedes the opportunity for Gaza students who want to pursue their education in the West Bank. For example, faculty and students from the Gaza Strip must acquire a permit from the Israeli military authorities before they can study or teach in any of the West Bank universities.

Needless to say, this permit is under the arbitrary control of the military authorities. Palestinians should have the basic right to travel freely between the West Bank and Gaza.

As you might already know, 40 per cent of the entire Palestinian population lives in the Gaza Strip, where there is only one small university, and where the number of students exceeds that university's ability to absorb them. The only alternative Gaza students have, is to study at one

of the West Bank's six universities.

West Bank and Gaza Palestinians who graduated during the off-campus studies are prevented by the Israeli military authorities from finding a job in the public sector. Occupation forces say that those students graduated in defiance of a closure order against the universities.

Organisations in which the graduates seek employment are Palestinian, but they follow military orders. This situation applies to government schools in the West Bank and Gaza, who prior to the Israeli occupation in 1967 followed the Jordanian and Egyptian ministries of education respectively.

In our capacity as the Palestinian education authority, the Council for Higher Education seeks assistance from government institutions, international organisations, and all those who support peace and human rights, to intervene and stop the Israeli measures imposed on Palestinian universities. It is enough that Palestinian educational institutions are suffering from a financial crisis; Israeli escalations are uncalled for.

The appeal was signed by Dr. Naim Abu Hommos, secretary general of the Council for Higher Education.

Democrats charge administration trying to thwart probe on Iraq

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — Democratic members of the U.S. Congress have accused the Bush administration of trying to thwart an investigation into U.S.-Iraqi relations before the Gulf war.

Democrats accuse the Republican administration of actions that encouraged the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and turning a blind eye towards Iraq's alleged use of U.S. food assistance loans to buy weapons prior to the Aug. 2 invasion.

A battery of eight administration lawyers denied efforts to hinder the inquiry at an acrimonious hearing convened by House Banking Chairman Henry Gonzalez, a Texas Democrat.

Mr. Gonzalez said the White House had formed an inter-agency group to "discourage, frustrate, evade and thwart" five congressional committees investigating Iraq policy.

Republican members dismissed the charges as political smoke. Democrats are accusing President George Bush of a costly foreign policy blunder, saying that by supporting Iraq until the eve of its invasion of Kuwait he encouraged it to believe it could get away with its aggression.

"The administration has at every turn tried to block, delay, obscure and interfere with this investigation," said Democratic Rep. Sam Gejdenson, one of four committee chairmen testifying about their probes.

Rep. Charles Rose, chairman of the sub-committee on foreign agriculture, said the administration knew as far back as 1986 that Iraq was using U.S.-guaranteed loans to buy weapons instead of food. He said the administration ignored this information and continued to guarantee some \$5 billion in U.S. farm goods sales to Iraq.

A witness from the General Accounting Office (GAO), the investigative arm of Congress, testified that his investigators believed some kickbacks paid by U.S. tobacco and grain exporters could have been used by Iraq to buy weapons.

But Agriculture Department counsel Alan Raul insisted that all investigations "have uncovered no evidence to date" that any of the guaranteed loans were used by Iraq to buy weapons.

Rep. Doug Barnard, said in written testimony that the Com-

merce Department has admitted altering documents relating to export licenses of technology to Iraq, to remove designations of a military end use.

He said a Justice Department and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), investigation of the alterations had failed to yield results for more than a year.

Mr. Gonzalez disclosed internal White House documents instructing other government agencies to get permission before releasing any document to Congress, and to avoid releasing documents where at all possible.

All the committee chairmen complained that documents were withheld, not to protect state secrets but to avoid embarrassing the administration.

One such document, said Mr. Gejdenson, was a secret directive written by President Bush on Oct. 2, 1989, urging U.S. government agencies to strengthen political and economic ties with Iraq in order to increase U.S. influence in that country.

"Ten months to the day after George Bush said that we should provide military assistance to Iraq, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait," Rep. Gejdenson said.

"It was a foreign policy blunder of the first order. Especially since it was followed by a war that may well have been avoided," he said.

The packed hearing was rife with partisan policies. Republicans said — and shouted — that it is easy to criticise in hindsight but insisted ties to Iraq were needed.

The nature of those ties was outlined in the previously secret, damaging directive issued by Mr. Bush on Oct. 2, 1989.

"Normal relations between the United States and Iraq would serve our longer-term interests," Bush wrote in the memo that was circulated to his top staff. "The United States government should propose economic and political incentives for Iraq to moderate its behaviour and to increase our influence."

The directive was first reported in Friday's New York Times. It

puts meat on Democratic charges that Mr. Bush coddled Iraq. But Republicans dismiss the attacks as election-year politics concocted to hurt Mr. Bush's foreign policy record.

The document, while backing political and economic incentives for Iraq, also warns of sanctions if Baghdad used chemical and biological weapons or developed nuclear weapons.

Large parts of Mr. Bush's policy plan, released by Rep. Gejdenson, were blacked out on declassification.

The directive said government should help U.S. businesses take part in the reconstruction of the Iraqi energy industry and economy, devastated by an eight-year war with Iran.

"Also, as means of developing access to an influence with the Iraqi defence establishment, the United States should consider sales of on-lethal forms of military assistance," Mr. Bush wrote in the directive.

Top Bush administration officials have admitted they made mistakes in dealing with Iraq but said it seemed prudent at the time to pursue U.S. interest in the oil-rich Gulf, to counterbalance Iraq against the military might of Iran, and to try and draw Iraq into the realm of friendly nations.

"We have nothing whatsoever to hide regarding this policy area," Secretary of State James Baker wrote in a 1991 letter to one congressional investigator.

Some key witnesses — including Mr. Bush's top lawyer Boyden Gray — refused to show up at the hearing, fueling the Democratic charges of a coverup.

"The committee will not be stonewalled by the White House and if need be, I will ask for subpoena authority in order to obtain the necessary information and witnesses," said Rep. Gonzalez.

Members of the House judiciary committee are expected to push next week for an independent counsel to probe the "Iraqgate" scandal.

Foreigners sweat to rebuild Kuwait as locals flex only financial muscle

By Peter Waldman
The Wall Street Journal

KUWAIT CITY — Aaron Somadosa can hardly stand up — a sure sign that Kuwait is getting on its feet.

After a 10-hour day pounding fenders in a body shop, Mr. Somadosa crumples onto a lower bunk in the room he shares with five other Sri Lankan labourers. Their dingy boarding house is home to swarms of black flies and 21 Asian guest workers who line up morning and night for the tenement's only toilet and shower. A pair of open basins lying side by side on the floor of a small closet.

"We thought Kuwaitis would be happy to see us back" after the Gulf war, says Mr. Somadosa. "But the treatment has gotten worse."

With many oil wells gushing again and their bank debts wiped clean by government fiat, Kuwaitis are slowly rebuilding — on the backs of foreign workers. The euphoria of national liberation, and the promise it bred of constructing a new society based on real Kuwaitis doing real work, is long gone. Instead, many Kuwaitis have reverted to doing what they seem to do best: Nothing.

"If they didn't have to, even the Japanese wouldn't work," says Jassem Al Sadoun, a Kuwaiti business consultant, explaining his country's sloth.

Kuwait's interior ministry won't divulge statistics, but the number of foreign workers in the country has risen sharply in the past year after falling an estimated 50 per cent to roughly 700,000 during the seven-month Iraqi occupation that ended with the Gulf war early last year (that

compares with about 650,000 Kuwaiti citizens). Gone are most of the 500,000 or so Palestinians — kicked out for allegedly siding with Iraq — who had built and managed Kuwait over the previous 25 years. In their place have come thousands of less skilled Egyptians, Iranians and South Asians.

"They've simply replaced one nationality with others," says Kuwaiti Esa Al Sarai, who couldn't find a single countryman to fill any of the 30 job openings at his small aluminum company last fall. "No Kuwaiti will get his hands dirty. Nothing has changed."

About 70 per cent of Kuwaitis hold government jobs. Civil-service salaries are modest — a 30-year-old government engineer earns \$30,000 a year — but the benefits are unbeatable: Full health care, full school tuition including foreign study, housing assistance, cheap loans and, best of all, a 20-hour work week, for those who work.

"In my department," says a civil engineer who works for the Kuwait City Municipality, "I have 20 employees, but six who do the work. If the rest come in at all, they sit around and drink coffee."

Many Kuwaitis show a pride in the Iraqi occupation period. Brutal as it was, the occupation was a time when Kuwaitis say they took charge of their lives: They scrounged for food, cleaned streets, coordinated emergency services and ran a gutsy underground resistance.

But the momentary work ethic has long since slipped. A foreign-born manager at Gulf Bank, Kuwait's second largest, has told overtime for months, he says, trying to sort out the bank's

tangled finances. When he asked two of Kuwaiti employees to put in extra hours themselves, they agreed — staying as late as 3:00 p.m. after two days, though, they started knocking off again after lunch.

"They told me the extra hours made them tired," the banker says.

So the onus is back on Kuwaiti guest workers, many of whom like Mr. Somadosa, say they're grateful to have jobs at all but bitter about the cost. Kuwait does have some labour on its books, but they're rarely used to protect foreigners. More often, in fact, Kuwaiti police intervene to protect Kuwaiti employers, by revoking guest workers' passports and by jailing them when disputes arise.

"People come to me weeping, but I'm helpless," says the labour attaché at one South Asian embassy here. "The Kuwaitis have no respect for human dignity and labour. I don't know what their problem is, especially after God blessed them with liberation. It is too much love for the dinar?"

Mr. Somadosa waited out the war in Sri Lanka, then his old employers from Kuwait tracked him down last summer and urged him to return. They promised a fat raise, to about \$350 a month, with further increases to come, and a free roundtrip plane ticket. He jumped for it.

But nearly a year later, his pay is just 75 per cent of what was promised, with no raises in sight. And from that, the body shop is deducting \$33 a month to pay off his plane ticket.

"I wish the Americans had stayed here and built something for this country," Mr. Somadosa says. "There's so much money, but the people are so cruel."

Ex-Afghan king warns against interference

LONDON (R) — The former king of Afghanistan has said peace and stability would not return to his country unless neighbouring states refrained from interfering in its affairs.

King Zahir Shah, who has lived in Rome since being deposed in a 1978 coup, was speaking in an interview with the Persian-language weekly Khatyban of London a month after Mujahideen guerrillas took power from the collapsed communist government.

"The experience of 13 years of war and destruction for our people can only be summarised in their united desire for peace at home and freedom from outside powers," the ex-king said in the interview released by Khatyban on Friday.

"Our neighbouring countries should also respect these points if we are to see real stability in the region," he added. He did not refer specifically to any country.

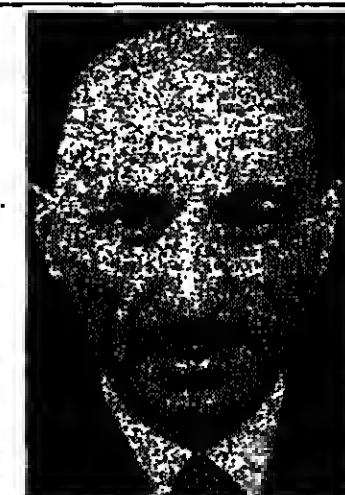
The former king said he hoped rival leaders Ahmad Shah Massoud and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar would join forces.

The two men held talks on Monday ending with a peace declaration. They also called on interim President Sibghatullah Mojibuddin not to extend his two-month tenure.

Zahir Shah expressed his distaste for Islamic fundamentalism, which he believed was threatening to disrupt the emergence of a secular and democratic government in Kabul.

"Islamic fundamentalism has no place in our people's religious and cultural heritage. Certainly Afghanistan is a Muslim nation and will remain so. Fundamentalism is an imported notion for us," the former king said.

Zahir Shah, interviewed in



Rome, repeated his willingness to serve Afghanistan in any capacity if needed by his countrymen.

Saudi residence ransacked

The deserted residence of Saudi Arabia's envoy to Afghanistan was ransacked for the sixth time since the Islamic caretaker government took power last month, security sources said Saturday.

When the two guards saw the bandits approaching Saturday, the sources said, they gave them the keys and then left the premises.

"They were tired of trying to fight these guys off. So when they showed up they said 'wait,' and handed them the keys and left," said one source, speaking conditionally of anonymity.

The sources said the bandits took an air conditioner, blankets and mattresses, among the few items still left in the house.

The caretaker government has condemned the looting of the Saudi residence and called it an act of sabotage to damage relations between the two Muslim nations.

Saudi Arabia supported the rebels in their 14-year fight against communist rule, matching the contribution of the United States dollar for dollar.

Iraqis head for Mecca to perform Haj

BAGHDAD (R) — Clergymen gave their blessings and senior officials waved as 9,606 Iraqi pilgrims boarded air-conditioned coaches to Mecca to perform the annual ritual of Haj.

"We are purely on a religious journey. We are going to the house of God," answered a 60-year-old pilgrim who asked whether his Saudi hosts would give him a warm welcome.

Last year, only 600 Iraqi pilgrims could make it to Mecca.

Saudi Arabia, guardian of Islam's holiest shrines, was the springboard for the U.S.-led multinational force that ejected Iraqi occupation troops from Kuwait last year.

But the pilgrims interviewed by Reuters said they harboured no bad feelings towards their "Saudi brethren."

"The haj is part of Islam and not part of politics," a pilgrim said.

Saudi Arabia agreed to receive 18,000 Iraqi pilgrims, Baghdad's quota according to a ruling by the Organisation of Islamic Conference which restricts the number of pilgrims from any member country to 1,000 per one million Muslim-population.

But Iraq, under U.N. sanctions, could not fill the quota as the cost of the journey, amounting to 6,500 Iraqi dinars is beyond the reach of many people.

"It is too much money. But I had to go. I am 72," said Khaleel Jassim.

Pilgrimage to Mecca is a must for all Muslims at least once in a lifetime if they can afford the cost of the journey.

"The Saudis do not accept Iraqi money and the foreign cash is very dear," said Haji Hamid Saad.

Officially the dinar is worth \$3 but on the Baghdad black market the dollar fetches 15 dinars.

Jordan Times
Tel: 667171

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

| JORDAN TELEVISION | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| Tel: 773111-19 | |
| PROGRAMME TWO | |
| 17:30 | Michael Vaillant |
| 17:45 | Des Chaffers et Des Lettres |
| 18:15 | L'École des Faux |
| 19:00 | News France |
| 19:15 | Carnet de Notes |
| 19:30 | News in Hebrew |
| 20:00 | News in Arabic |
| 20:30 | Wings |
| 21:10 | Documentary |
| 22:00 | News in English |
| 22:30 | Law and Order |
| PRAYER TIMES | |
| 01:54 | Fajr |
| 05:27 | Sunrise (Doha) |
| 16:14 | Asr |
| 19:29 | Maghrib |
| 21:12 | Isha |
| CHURCHES | |
| St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swissch Tel. 810740 | |
| Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785 | |
| St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590 | |
| Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440 | |
| De la Salle Church Tel. 661757 | |
| Torre Santa Church Tel. 623366 | |
| Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623411 | |
| Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 628543 | |
| Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331 | |
| Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775281 | |
| Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751 | |
| Assam International Church Tel. 685326 | |
| Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 511265 | |
| The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 823834, 654932 | |
| Church of the Nazareth Tel. 675691 | |
| WEATHER | |
| Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology | |
| It will be fair and some clouds will appear at various altitudes. Winds will be northwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and some calm. | |
| Min./Max. temp. | |
| Amman 16/28 | |
| Aqaba 22/37 | |
| Dajers 15/31 | |
| Jordan Valley 19/32 | |
| Yesterday's high temperatures: Am- | |

| man 30, Aqaba 39. Humidity readings: Amman 33 per cent, Aqaba 17 per cent. | Khalil pharmacy 985477 |
|--|--|
| USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS | |
| NIGHT DUTY | |
| AMMAN: | Dr. Abdul Majed Al Sha'er 791405 |
| | Dr. Ararat Al Ashab 602507 |
| | Dr. Mahmood Amara 888683 |
| | Dr. Nidal Al Dalah 697635 |
| | Pirap pharmacy 661912 |
| | Fordos pharmacy 778336 |
| | Al Asema pharmacy 637025 |
| | Natrosah pharmacy 623672 |
| | Al Salam pharmacy 636730 |
| | Yacoub pharmacy 646445 |
| | Shamash pharmacy 637660 |
| IRBID: | Dr. Ahmad Abu Bakr (—) |
| | Al Shams pharmacy 278825 |
| ZARQA: | Dr. Samir Al Lawzi (—) |

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------|
| Radio Jordan | 774111 |
| Water Authority | 680100 |
| Jordan Electricity Authority | 815015 |
| Electric Power | |
| Company | 636381 |
| RJ Flight Information | 68-53200 |
| Queen Alia Intl. Airport | 68-53200 |

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

| | |
|---------------------------------|------------|
| Hussein Medical Centre | 813813/372 |
| Khalid Maternity, J. Arm. | 642412 |
| Abdali Maternity, J. Arm. | 642412 |
| Jabal Amman Maternity | 642362 |
| Mahees, J. Amman | 626140 |
| Pilestine, Shmouni | 644117/4 |
| Al-Badri, J. Amman | 669131 |
| University Hospital | 669131 |
| Al-Musher Hospital | 667277/9 |
| The Islamic, Abdall | 666172/31 |
| Al-Anhi, Abdall | 664146 |
| Al-Anhi, Al-Madani | 777010/3 |
| Al-Badri, J. Astrafed | 771126 |
| Armen, Marwa | 691161/5 |
| Queen Alia Hospital | 602240/50 |
| Amnal Hospital | 674125 |
| 2. ZARQA: | |
| ZARQA, Raj. Hussein | monezz22 |

Home News



PRINCESS OPENS SCHOOL — Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Saturday opened a girls' school in Madaba which cost JD 500,000. Work on the school, named after the Princess, had started in 1989 and according to Ministry of Education officials, the new school has 28 classrooms, a laboratory, a computer training hall, a library, a multipurpose activity hall and a unit for teaching handicrafts. The officials said the school accommodates 1,000 students.



MINISTER RECEIVES CHAIRMAN — Interior Minister Jawdat Shoukri received Saturday chairman of the Arab League Interior Ministers Council Nassef Ibrahim on the occasion of the end of his term as chairman. Mr. Shoukri commended the distinguished efforts exerted by Mr. Ibrahim during his 10-year term. The minister said that Mr. Ibrahim had contributed to drafting general joint Arab agreements, including the Arab strategy for combating crime and the Arab law on anti-narcotics law.

Premier instructs government offices to provide investment programme details

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shakir has instructed all government offices to provide by June 30 the Ministry of Planning and the Budget Department at the Ministry of Finance with their investment programmes scheduled for 1993-1997.

The request was made through a circular issued Saturday which called on the various departments to include in their plans capital projects required to be implemented in this period, including those underway or new projects to be started.

Each department should present an assessment of the overall cost of each project and the amount of funds required each year for the projects to be calculated in the Jordanian and foreign currency, said the circular. It said that each assessment should also cover such aspects as sources of local or foreign funds for the project and whether any agreements exist on financing them, in addition to the annual operational costs for each project. The circular said that the statements should also include an outline of the specific projects and the expected results.

The prime minister stated that each project should be debated in detail through coordination between the Ministry of Planning and the Budget Department when the work begins on preparing the 1993 fiscal budget. He said each department should name the projects that require priority to be set in line with and contribute towards the implementation of the economic restructuring programme and the aims of comprehensive socio-economic development in all regions of the Kingdom.

The prime minister said the 1993 capital budget will serve as the initial year in the investment programmes.

Jordan to attend labour meeting in Geneva

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan's delegation to an International Labour Organisation (ILO) meeting in Geneva will submit a set of working papers dealing with the application of international agreements on the rights of expatriates and migrant workers forced to leave their place of work, according to Minister of Labour Abdul Karim Al Kabari.

The minister, who is heading the delegation to the ILO's 97th meeting which opens Monday, made the statement upon leaving Amman for Geneva Saturday.

A flood of Palestinian and Jordanian workers expelled from Kuwait, as a result of the Gulf war, has swelled the ranks of the jobless in Jordan to a dangerous point.

According to government statistics, by the end of 1991, there were almost 129,000 registered unemployed people or about 19 per cent of the labour force in the Kingdom. Unemployment first rose significantly at the end of the 1980s because of difficult economic conditions blamed on the failure of oil-rich Arab nations to meet their commitments in financial aid to the Kingdom.

The hardships were boosted by the return of more than 300,000 Jordanians from Kuwait and the rest of the Gulf area after the Gulf war.

He said that the working papers also cover such questions as work environment, social security and vocational training for workers. The minister, who is accompanied by a group of senior officials from his ministry, said the three-week conference was scheduled to review a report by ILO's director general, covering in part democracy vis-a-vis the work of ILO. Jordan, in this respect, has

Regulations announced for new banknotes and coins

By Omar Abanda

AMMAN (Petra) — The Central Bank of Jordan Saturday announced regulations for new Jordanian banknotes and coins in various denominations providing descriptions of various bills of paper money and coins.

The regulations retained the current denominations of half a dinar, one dinar, five dinars, ten dinars and the twenty dinar notes with the same colours but with some amendments to the pictures, shapes and embellishments on them.

According to the regulations, the half dinar bill will carry the Amman ancient castle picture, the new dinar (greenish colour) will carry pictures of the ancient site of Jerash and the Roman colonnaded street, the five dinar bill (reddish colour) will carry a picture of the ancient city of Petra, the ten dinar bill (bluish colour) will carry the picture of the Al Rabad ancient castle, while the 20 dinar bill (brownish colour) will carry a picture of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem.

According to the regulations, writings on one face will be in Arabic with the picture of His Majesty King Hussein on the right hand side with the Arab head dress and on the left a watermark of the King. Bills will indicate that they were issued by the Central Bank of Jordan and will carry serial numbers together with the signatures of the minister of finance and the Central Bank of Jordan governor.

On the back of the bill, the writings will appear in English with the date of issue in Arabic and English; each bill will have a metal thread.

According to the new regulations, a new dinar will appear in the form of a coin along with coins of the half dinar, quarter dinar, 10 piaster, five piaster, one piaster and half a piaster.

The regulations state that the dinar coin is made up of 70 per cent copper, 24.5 per cent zinc, 5.5 per cent nickel and will be of a seven sided shape, weighing 9.25 grammes.

Each coin carries the side picture of King Hussein with English and Arabic writing and minting dates.

The regulations noted that the existing currency will remain valid until the Council of Ministers decides to withdraw it from circulation.



The Arab League Saturday opens a meeting on educational programmes for the occupied Arab territories (Petra photo)

Arab League opens meeting on education in Arab lands

AMMAN (Petra) — The Arab League Saturday opened a meeting here on educational programmes for occupied Arab territories and called on Arab countries to intensify their efforts to counter Israel's policies which distort Arab culture.

The call was voiced by Wael Fahmi, head of the Arab League's delegation to the 45th meeting of a pan-Arab committee on educational programmes for Arab students under Israeli rule.

The educational system in the occupied Arab lands faces two major problems which are obstructing progress in providing culture and education to the young generation, said Mr. Fahmi at the opening session.

The first problem concerns the shortage of financial means, human resources and school textbooks for the students as well as appropriate school buildings that can support the educational process, said Mr. Fahmi.

He said that the second problem concerns the ongoing repressive measures against the Arab educational institutions which obstruct the educational programmes beamed at the Palestinian students under occupation.

The Jordanian programmes had contributed most effectively towards a sound and positive educational process and helped counter Israel's practices against the intifada and the schools and students, said Mr. Akash.

The meeting is being organised at a time when the Arab states are more in need of solidarity and joint action in the face of the common threats, said Mr. Akash. He expressed hope that the committee, which comprises Jordan, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and Lebanon as well as the Arab League and the Arab States Broadcasting Union (ASBU), will seize the opportunity of this meeting to chart a new plan for further bolstering educational programmes for the benefit of Palestinian students.

Saad Farkouh, director of technical education at the Ministry of Education, told the meeting that the Arab-Israeli struggle is a cultural one for survival and "it is incumbent on the Arab states to strengthen the Palestinian children's confidence in their history and culture in the face of Israel's atrocities."

The five-day meeting is scheduled to review an Arab League report on educational programmes and means of promoting the committee's work during the current infatada in the occupied Arab lands.

Reorganisation of health system's economy will be 'enormous' task

By Mona Ghannem
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — In a press conference held at the Jordan Inter-Continental Hotel Saturday by the French Cultural Centre, representatives of the Jordanian-French Medical Association further elaborated on the outcome of their recent medical conference.

The two-day conference, which ended Friday evening, consisted of a series of lectures, debates and discussions on the economy of the Jordanian health structure with a French delegation, made up mostly of economists and hospital administrators, providing information from personal experience. The Jordanian participants represented the Ministry of Health, Jordanian universities and the economic sector.

Dr. Jacques Milliez, president of the French-Jordanian Medical Association in Paris, commented on the "enormous" challenge of meeting the economy of health by striving to address the needs of the health sector. "We have to put things on the table," he said. Jordan must define the exact role of the hospital, including purpose, size and equipment, continue training for people already practising medicine, stand in solidarity to fight diseases and most importantly, come to some sort of financial balance.

Jordan's main financial concern, in regards to health, is the need to extend medical coverage and insurance to everyone. In trying to assess allocation of finances, the health sector will inevitably stumble upon the question of "how much?" How much will the military medical coverage be able to contribute? How much can the private sector invest? And how much will the government fork over for the care of its citizens?

"No one (at the conference) pretended they could solve the problem," said Dr. Milliez in reference to the question of finances, but at least the debate has commenced and initiative is being taken. "The French came to talk about their experiences," he said, noting that health standards in Europe are quite high and nobody expects Jordan's health sector to transform overnight, particularly when it took France 100 years to perfect its own social security system.

"This seminar helped to communicate and discuss common problems in order to avoid them" when the time comes to take (tangible) action in the reorganisation of Jordan's health structure.

Nonetheless, Dr. Milliez pointed out that "substantial" steps are being taken to address the situation. For example, one of the Jordanian lecturers at the conference emphasised the need for an executive council to be established where the intervention of Jordanian experts could lead to an official, conclusive proposal. Health Minister Aref Al Bataineh talked about cooperation with other Arab countries to set up an organ transplant system, benefiting the Middle Eastern countries involved; as it stands now, organ transplants are much too costly for Jordan to attempt an integrated programme on its own.

Dr. Milliez also stressed the importance of the media in spreading awareness and journalists' role in motivating public response. More importantly, however, Dr. Milliez noted that the Jordanian Parliament will indeed hold discussions in the coming weeks to evaluate and assess the health situation.

Dr. Fatieh Saadi, president of the Jordanian-French Medical Association in Amman, explained in more detail the Jordanian participation needed for improving the health sector. She underlined the use of manpower, of which she said Jordan has plenty, in all aspects of the health sector.

Dr. Saadi recalled the Jordanian Medical Council, created in 1982 but inactive for the past five years. "The council remains on paper," she said, pointing out that the council can and should be reactivated.

Dr. Saadi also stressed the training of preventive medicine in Jordanian universities by requiring courses in primary health care. And to ease on costs and space in hospitals, she suggested medical care at home and "day care hospitals" which would treat patients long-term throughout the day but allow them to return home in the evenings.

Although both Dr. Saadi and Dr. Milliez have a lot of confidence in Jordanian doctors, most of whom are well trained, they do not deny that the restructuring of the health system's economy will be a complex and arduous project involving more conferences in the near future.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

PSD director addresses federation

AMMAN (Petra) — "The society has a significant role in preventing crimes and delinquency through enabling individuals to reach their goals and fulfil their desires legitimately," Public Security Department (PSD) Director Major-General Fadel Ali Fuheid said Saturday. In a lecture he delivered Saturday at the Jordanian Women's Federation, Maj. Gen. Fuheid said that sound upbringing of individuals contributes to creating and bolstering the individual's society and therefore reduces the number of crimes. The PSD director affirmed that justice could never be achieved without the citizens' initiative which stems from true belonging to the society and the legitimacy of laws. He said the role of the society exceeds combating crimes to the rehabilitation of criminals to make them adapt with the social environment and to help them coalesce with others.

Environmental committee holds meeting

AMMAN (Petra) — The Information Committee of the National Strategy for the Protection of the Environment held a meeting Saturday under the chairmanship of Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Abdul Razzaq Tubeishat, who is also chairman of the strategy's steering panel. Dr. Tubeishat said that information on the environment should be issued by the concerned authorities and noted that an environmental information centre will be established at the ministry. He stressed the importance of spreading environment awareness among citizens and said such awareness should stem from principled stands and a sound educational system. The minister urged the committee to continue its periodical meetings to draw up its working plan. Secretary-General of the Ministry of Information Trad Al Fayez, who is chairman of the Information Committee, outlined the basic features of the committee's working plans. He stressed the importance of coordination with the concerned authorities, so as to reach a comprehensive conception of the environmental strategy's work programmes.

Compulsory course to be introduced at colleges

AMMAN (Petra) — Higher Education Minister Awad Khleifat Saturday said a compulsory national education course will be introduced to the curricula of community colleges in Jordan as of the next scholastic year. In a meeting with deans of community colleges, Dr. Khleifat called for activating the role of these colleges and for giving due attention to teachers at these colleges. The minister denied rumors of the community colleges system being cancelled and described these rumours as baseless. He said there were plans to restructure some specialisation and branches of education at these colleges so that they suit the needs of the local market.

Independence Day celebrations continue

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Alia Bint Al Hussein attended Saturday at the Palace of Culture a celebration held by the National Schools Group on the occasion of Independence Day. The celebration included speeches, national songs and dances and theatre shows.

Iraqi artist displays his visions of the desert

By Maha Adnan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Abdul Jabbar Salman, an Iraqi artist who paints the desert in a modern way, currently has 43 works, which emphasise the artist's obsession with the desert, displayed at the Alia Art Gallery at First Circle.

Mr. Salman is categorised as an artist of the "pioneer generation," a group who studied in Paris, Rome and London, then left a strong impact on the contemporary art movement in Iraq. These artists are considered very active in planting the first seeds of modern art in Iraq.

Mr. Salman, who is mostly influenced by environment and its surroundings, is known as a realist. His paintings reflect a special sensitivity towards colour with intense and bright colours often representing people.

In many of the works displayed, the contents of the composition are not clear. Had it not been for the main theme that predominates his works, the desert, it may be difficult to know what the colours are, but at closer study, one can make out the dark brown as being a bedouin tent and the reds indicate clusters of people. To be able to define each colour as an object is the reason why Mr. Salman's work is not considered abstract.

Many of the works displayed in this exhibition show human figures or give the impression of clusters of people in a desert. But, it is not the usual aspects of the desert on which he concentrates the most. Instead, it is often the relationships between people with the desert. So one finds a painting entitled "Sand and Women," where different hues of sand colours are expressed and what may resemble human figures are painted in clusters.

What makes them more "human-like" is the use of deep, warm colours, that come in deep contrast with the faint pastels depicting the desert.

Mr. Salman himself describes his love of the desert theme as coming from his "love for the space, the mystery of the sand, and the bedouins who live in the open air away from the cities."

As part of his career, Mr. Salman, who graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Fine Arts from the Baghdad

Jordan, Yemen commence talks on energy

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan and Yemen opened here Saturday meetings designed to promote their cooperation in energy-related matters.

Yemeni Deputy Minister of Electricity and Water Mohammad Abdul Aleem Alwan met Energy and Mineral Resources Minister Ali Abul Ragheib to discuss energy matters and to promote existing Jordanian-Yemeni cooperation in electricity generation.

Discussion at the meeting, which was attended by senior officials and the director general of the Jordan Electricity Authority (JEA), covered topics related to energy in general that had been discussed by the Higher Jordanian-Yemeni Joint Committee last September. The committee had decided on measures like the exchange of expertise and Yemen's benefit from Jordan's experiments to produce electricity through the employment of natural gas and alternatives and renewable sources of energy like solar and wind power. The two sides in the meeting voiced their satisfaction with the positive level of cooperation between JEA and the Yemeni electricity Corporation.

JEA sources said its technical teams have conducted a number of feasibility studies for the Yemeni corporation, especially on administrative and financial matters related to a number of energy projects.

Ministry Secretary-General Asem Ghosheh held separate meetings with the Yemeni official,

Officers launch anti-accident campaign

AMMAN (Petra) — Two non-commissioned officers from the Highway Patrol Department Saturday commenced on a month-long voluntary campaign in which they will tour the main streets in the Kingdom's governorates and districts. The two volunteers, who maintain the motto "No for Traffic Accidents," will distribute pamphlets and booklets on ways of reducing car accidents. The campaign is launched by the two volunteers as part of the Kingdom's celebrations of the International Traffic Day and the Arab Traffic Week.

WHAT'S GOING ON

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ Exhibition of paintings by five Malaysian artists at the National Gallery of Fine Arts, Jabal Luvvibdeh.
- ★ Exhibition of paintings by Ali Taleb and Rafiq Nazari at Abdul Hameed Shouman Foundation Gallery — (10 a.m. - 5 p.m.).
- ★ Exhibition of paintings by Iraqi artist Abdul Jabbar Salman at Alia Art Gallery.
- ★ Exhibition of paintings by the Nazareth School students at the French Cultural Centre.
- ★ Plastic art exhibition by 40 Jordanian artists entitled "An Artist and a Painting" at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street.
- ★ Exhibition of handicrafts, gifts, leather products, scarves, food and sweets at the Amman Plaza Hotel.

FILM

- ★ Feature film entitled "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" at the American Centre — 7 p.m.

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Jordan Times

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France's wrong move

AT THE height of the Gulf crisis, the Arab World, especially the Maghreb countries pleaded with France to show some difference with the American administration in order to avoid armed conflict between the West and Iraq. But France stood firmly on the side of the U.S. despite much criticism both inside the country and abroad. The French government told its Arab friends in the Maghreb union that France chose to stand on the side of the so-called allies only to later be able to sit on the negotiating table and influence the quest for peace in the region.

Now that the peace process has taken on some life, the French found it fit to defy their super American ally by granting Israel \$500 million in loan guarantees. The U.S., the strategic ally of Israel, it is recalled, has denied the Jewish state \$10 billion in guarantees because of Israeli defiance of the subject of settlements in the occupied Arab territories.

We can only look at this French "gesture" towards intransigent Israel as one way to sabotage the ongoing peace process and undermine U.S. efforts to ensure progress in the search for peace. The Israeli minister for trade and industry, Moshe Nissim, used the opportunity to criticise the U.S. for conditioning its approval of the loan guarantees to the halting of settlement buildings. "This is an example of the principle that aid for humanitarian purposes should not be mixed with political goals," Nissim was quoted as saying.

Seen against the dead certainty that the French gesture will free Israel to channel other funds to settlement activities in the occupied territories while using the French loan guarantees within the limitations they carry, there is little doubt that Nissim and the headline Israeli establishment have enough to thank Paris for.

We do not object to the French extending all possible help to immigrants, including giving them the right to migrate to France itself, for example. But we feel outraged that the French should enable Yitzhak Shamir's Likud government to divert funds from its own budget into settlement activity in the occupied Arab territories. The French move is also ill-timed since it improves the standing of the radical Likud alliance in the Israeli elections, which are only three weeks away.

Whether sinister or naive, the French move will surely anger many Arab governments, and will add to the Arab masses' mistrust of the intentions of the French administration.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I Arabic daily Saturday commented on Israel's decision to ban Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank from entering the Holy City of Jerusalem Sunday on the anniversary of Israel's illegal annexation of East Jerusalem. This decision provides another proof against Israel's being legitimate to have any kind of control or authority over the holy city because such actions are racist and show that the Jewish state does not give any regard to Muslim and Christian holy places in occupied Palestine, the paper said. It said that the world community had rejected Israel's illegal annexation of Arab Jerusalem 25 years ago, but the Israelis have been intent on controlling Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, among other holy sites. Jordan has been right all along to adhere to Arab and Islamic rights and to demand that its appointed religious committee alone be charged with the task of appointing issues related to the holy places, the paper argued. It said that the Israelis are, through UNESCO, trying to open and the door for internationalising the holy city and controlling the holy places, including the Dome of the Rock which Jordan is now restoring. By closing Jerusalem in the face of the Palestinians, Sunday, Israel is depriving the worshippers of the right to pray in the holy places and the world is witnessing an open and flagrant defiance of all international principles, the paper said. The paper said that UNESCO and other parties trying to tamper with the question of restoring the holy places should be on their guard and beware of Israel's actions.

For its part, Sawt Al Shaah daily commented on Israel's escalation of atrocities against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, noting that the current onslaught on the Arabs was part of a conspiracy aimed to undermine the security of the region. Besides escalating its onslaught on the Arabs in Gaza and the West Bank, Israel is stepping up its acts of aggression against South Lebanon in a further show of determination to bring the whole region to the brink of war, the paper said. The Shamir government has a reason behind all this namely to ensure voters support for the ruling Likud bloc in the coming parliamentary elections, the paper said. By endangering the whole region and bringing about an all-out war, the Shamir government hopes to win the coming elections and perpetuate the rule of extremists like Arens, Sharon and Shamir, the paper said. Neither the aggression on Lebanon nor the escalation of aggression inside the occupied Arab land were so far of use and did not achieve Israel's objectives because they were all terrorist actions, the paper said. Even if Israel aborts the peace process, the paper said, it can never make the Arabs abandon their rights or forget that the occupied land is theirs.

Sunday's Economic Pulse

Jordan's economy performed well against odds

By Dr. Fahd Al Fanek

Jordan was one of the countries most hurt by the Gulf crisis, and war, especially in having to observe the economic sanctions against Iraq imposed by the United Nations. The Jordanian economy was almost integrated with the Iraqi economy for 10 years before the eruption of the crisis. Its budget depended heavily on Arab official aid, which was abruptly cut. Its balance of payments was extremely dependent on remittances from Jordanian expatriates in the Gulf, which declined by one third, and on the traditional export markets of the Gulf states which were temporarily closed until October 5, 1991 when the government of Saudi Arabia decided to reopen its borders with Jordan for normal trade traffic.

When the Gulf crisis emerged, Jordan was in its second year of the economic adjustment programme agreed upon with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Jordanian performance under the programme was until then extremely satisfactory and in many fields exceeding the set targets. The crisis forced Jordan to suspend the programme. Jordan also suspended debt service in a selective manner. The economy was run on a crisis management basis all through the remainder of 1991. The economic sectors worst hit by the crisis were: tourism, transport, transit business and exports.

The Jordanian economic and social difficulties were further compounded by the massive return of around 300,000 Jordanians from Kuwait and elsewhere, which intensified the pressure on the country's limited resources and facilities, and called for huge capital investments which were conservatively estimated by the Ministry of Planning at around \$4.5 billion to finance new houses,

schools, hospitals, and expanding water and electricity supplies in order to cope with this new human wave that was unleashed while Jordan was already in difficult time.

The Kingdom received substantial foreign aid in the form of grants and soft loans from Germany, Japan, the European Community and several other industrialised countries, which helped the Jordanian government face the shock. Some returns brought their savings along with them which were estimated at \$475 million. This helped create some kind of short-term recovery. Jordan, however, continued to be in need for large amounts of external aid to absorb the returning families and overcome its difficulties.

Despite the damages caused by the Gulf crisis and the Gulf war during the first quarter of 1991, the Jordanian economy later in the year, restored its momentum and achieved some recovery after the war ended.

IMF experts estimated that the Jordanian economy grew during the year as a whole by some 0.8 per cent in real terms. Since they predicted inflation in 1991 to range around 10 per cent, while it did not actually exceed 8.2 per cent, it is most likely that the growth rate will be revised upwards to 2.5 per cent, which indicates an impressive performance taking into account the circumstances and the previous expectations.

Preliminary reports put Jordan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1991 at around JD 2,879 million (\$4.25 billion) reflecting a growth rate of 10.85 per cent in current prices, despite the drop of remittances by 34 per cent, and the decline of exports. The credit goes to the decrease of imports and the resilience

demonstrated by the Jordanian economy.

The Jordanian balance of payments in 1991 was healthy in general. The Kingdom's assets in foreign exchange rose to their highest level. The balance of payments reflected a substantial surplus measured by the net position of the banking sector in foreign exchange. The balance of payments however, remains in deficit if we take into account the external debt instalments that fell due but were not actually paid. Most likely, Paris Club and London Club agreed in March 1992 to reschedule these arrears with a long grace period.

Having realised the difficult circumstances of the country, its continued need to external grants and soft loans, the importance of rescheduling of debts, the Jordanian government adopted an economic adjustment programme approved by the IMF and the World Bank, extending over seven years 1992 - 1998.

The programme is growth oriented. It is meant to deal with the major imbalances in the economy, namely: budget deficit, balance of payments, current account deficit, and insufficient domestic savings. The programme called for further liberalisation of the economy, more individual initiative, promoting domestic, Arab and foreign investments on equal footing, containment of inflation, correcting distortions, especially in the energy and water sectors, reforming public sector entities, lowering the ceiling for customs tariff protection, expansion of consumption tax, paving the way for a general sales tax at source, restriction of credit facilities by banks to 9 per cent per annum and gradual reduction of subsidies.

Analysts urge concrete arms controls

By Norma Holmes

WASHINGTON — The five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, convening here May 28 for the sixth round of talks on Arms Transfers and Proliferation Arms Control Talks, should focus on concrete initiatives to control the flow of arms to the Middle East, a group of leading analysts said May 28.

In an Arms Control Association seminar marking the first anniversary of President Bush's Arms Control Initiative, the experts said the world's major arms supplier nations — Britain, France, China, the former Soviet Union and the United States — must move the talks from rhetoric to reality.

"We are in a long-term process," said Andrew Pierre, senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Over a historical period, he said, the concept of nations banding together to address mutual problems such as arms control, "is something quite new ... very different than anything that's been tried seriously in the past."

Mr. Pierre said he agreed with those who would urge that the United States should take the lead and go forward. "The fact that we've got these countries together and now committed to continuing, I think, is something not insignificant."

Other discussants at the May 28 forum were Richard Grinnett, a national defence specialist with the Congressional Research Service; Lee Feinstein, assistant director for research of the Arms Control Association; and Dr. Natalie J. Goldring, deputy director of the British-American Security Information Council.

Mr. Grinnett, who has published an annual report for the Congress on trends in conventional arms transfers to the Third World for the past decade, said "the Soviet Union had always been the leading supplier to the Third World, and the United States the second," until political and economic changes in the for-



mer USSR disorganised production and changed national priorities.

He said final arms transfer figures for 1991 are not yet complete, but "clearly the United States has been the leading supplier nation" in 1990 and will be in 1991.

In the final analysis, however, he said "economic forces in the market place may be more important than any decision by government control regimes" in controlling the flow of arms to the Middle East.

Mr. Grinnett said a worldwide shortage of cash flow among most Third World countries will create "a major sea change in the weapons trade in the Middle East that's going to be significant in the future."

Asked what effect cash flow economics are likely to have on Soviet surplus military equipment, Mr. Grinnett said that "it will create a real fall-off in sales" to traditional clients in the region from the Soviet Union.

"It's one thing to argue that you can have fire-sale prices ... (and) all this excess military equipment that they want to transfer because they need cash and they need the income," Mr. Grinnett noted, "but if the buying country can't pay for it, it doesn't seem that there's much incentive for someone to get rid of excess T-72 tanks and other kinds of weapons systems."

Dr. Goldring said the Permanent Five talks have been "the most prominent effort to restrain the arms trade since the end of the Gulf war."

Noting that the five nations "accounted for more than 80 per cent of the world's arms market in 1990," Dr. Goldring said "a great deal of potential for restraint" exists, but thus far very little of it has been realised from the Paris and London meetings in 1991.

In sketching the history of the arms control initiative, Dr. Goldring said that the Permanent Five delegates in earlier rounds of

talks recognised the dangers inherent in the indiscriminate transfer of weapons and expressed intent to exercise restraint through individual national controls. They agreed to support the U.N. arms register as a steps towards increased transparency, strongly supported the establishment of a weapons of mass destruction free zone in the Middle East, and committed themselves to developing various consultation mechanisms and information exchanges on arms transfers to the Middle East.

Following the second round of talks in London, in October 1991, they issued a communique with guidelines on conventional arms transfers, Dr. Goldring said. Interviews with officials after the meeting, however, "indicate that while there was progress, none of these issues was resolved," she said.

In addressing the question of cash transfers, Dr. Goldring said economic considerations "are very important to the Soviet Un-

ion because so many receive concessional terms to begin with." But the U.S. market is for the major clients "still looking at a wide-open market in the Middle East and an increasing market in the Pacific."

While in the Middle East sales are likely to entail cash sales to countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, potentially the Emirates, in the Pacific, she said, Pacific transfers are more likely to involve arrangements such as co-production, co-development, joint ventures, an expectation on the part of the recipient governments that, in paying cash, they're also buying into the technology. "So I think it's really important to distinguish among the suppliers and also distinguish among the recipients."

Mr. Feinstein also said that in London, the Permanent Five adopted general guidelines for arms exports to the Middle East, which "state laudable goals. ... However, unfortunately, the London Declaration does not go

beyond ... vague, undefined and unenforceable generalities.

But a point that has not been made, he stressed, is "we ought not to assume that all arms transfers or sales are bad or should be curtailed." He said that "if it's going to help the Russian economy and defence conversion to sell low-level technology to some benign country in Africa or Latin America — or even some parts of the Middle East — that's not necessarily so terrible. Countries have got to maintain defence capacities."

Mr. Pierre said with the exception of Iran, the main recipients of Soviet arms — Iraq, Afghanistan, India, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Central America, "don't have money or they're no longer in the cold war game and they are unlikely to be major recipients." He said that, according to one "Soviet or Russian estimate, whereas they exported something like \$18 billion worth two or three years ago, this is 'going to go down to \$4 billion for 1991.'"

Mr. Pierre characterised China politically as "the wild card," citing their earlier transfers "to pariah states" and "prospective missile sales" to Pakistan and to Syria. "It's clear they have helped Iran. They've been playing a sort of cat-and-mouse game as to whether they're going to abide by the Missile Control Technology Regime," he said.

"I think it was a major achievement to get the Chinese to participate in these five-party discussions," he said, although "they haven't really been very cooperative participants ever since joining."

Turning to the question of U.S. domestic controls, Mr. Feinstein said members of Congress and private analysts have suggested approaches to governing U.S. arms transfers including requiring prompt public disclosure of arms sales, strict enforcement of reporting requirements, and amending the Arms Export Control Act to require that Congress vote to approve certain military sales — United States Information Agency.

ICARDA's training helps address region's food-production problems

ALEPPO, SYRIA — Technology transfer is a fundamentally human process of sharing knowledge and experience between people. Training, more than any other activity, is the most important component in technology transfer.

Since its establishment in 1977, the International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA) has trained more than 4,000 technicians and scientists from over 50 countries around the world. Training is one of ICARDA's principal activities, and to date the centre has been successful in spreading information designed to boost agricultural productivity and sustainability in West Asia and North Africa (WANA), a region with an extremely fragile resource base and beset with a growing food deficit.

Confirmation of the effectiveness of ICARDA's training programme recently came from an extensive follow-up survey of 231 former participants in training activities. Almost 38 per cent of the respondents had assumed higher job responsibilities since their ICARDA training.

ICARDA's training programme offers a wide range of courses,

from intensive one-week practical sessions to major research projects leading to a PhD. In almost every training exercise, ICARDA acts as a partner with national, regional and international institutions to bring their diverse abilities to bear.

A recent example of this cooperative philosophy was a course on the use of satellite imagery for interpreting rainfall data, co-sponsored by the Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and ICARDA and held at the headquarters of the United Nations World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) in Geneva. Participants came from Morocco and Turkey, and made extensive use of satellite images provided by the European Space Agency and the Food and Agriculture Organisation's Remote Sensing Centre. In this instance, ICARDA acted as a catalyst, bringing together funding from a major donor agency, IDRC, with the world-renowned skills and technical resources of the WMO, FAO and European Space Agency.

Another evolving trend at ICARDA is "train the trainer" courses. ICARDA organised

such course in 1990 in Egypt, when six staff members from the Egyptian Seed Programme were trained in seed field inspection. In turn, these six trainers conducted two courses in 1991, and one so far in 1992. ICARDA's role in these courses has been mainly as facilitator, providing training materials, technical advice and coordinating funding.

A large share of the funds for the 1992 course was supplied by the Egyptian Central Administration for Seed and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) seed project in Egypt.

As ICARDA becomes more aware of the region's needs, it is tailoring its training activities to respond to local specific requirements. This is being pursued through frequent in-country or sub-regional courses on topics highly relevant to the countries involved. The courses are usually short, concise and intensive.

In the meantime, the courses conducted at ICARDA's main research station at Tel Hadya, south of Aleppo, Syria, are becoming more specialised, focusing on such topics as DNA molecular marker techniques, stress physiology and spatial

weather data generation. These courses are intended to enable senior scientists to master state-of-the-art research techniques within the constraints of available resources.

ICARDA's headquarters is also the site of long-term courses (usually running between four

and 18 weeks) during the cropping season from February to June.

Possibly more than any other activity, training is the key to progress in agricultural research.

Expensive equipment and facilities are no substitute for well-

qualified, capable and motivated scientists and technicians.

Through its training activities, ICARDA hopes to provide researchers in the region with the skills urgently needed to address the problems of food production in WANA — ICARDA News.



ICARDA's training activities entail spending much time in the field, observing first-hand technologies for acquiring practical experience in agricultural research.

World No-Tobacco Day

If you are suicidal, at least respect our desire to live

By Dr. Azmi Sharaiha

Today, Sunday, May 31, 1992, the world observes World No-Tobacco Day.

It is a day dedicated by the World Health Organisation and its member states to the cause of ensuring a tobacco-free society.

It is an occasion on which all those who smoke or chew tobacco should stop their

harmful and wasteful behaviour for at least 24 hours.

In 1992, the World No-Tobacco Day is dedicated to the right of workers to exercise their skills in the cleanest possible atmosphere, unpolluted by tobacco smoke and free from the stress and bad feelings that are generated between smokers and non-smokers in a closed workplace.

Several of the 4,000 elements that have been identified in tobacco smoke, such as carbon monoxide, formaldehyde, acrolein and benzene, can also exist in the workplace atmosphere. In that case, a worker who is also a smoker receives a dose of hazardous elements from both sources, and the overall risk of disease is increased.

Formaldehyde is often found in the atmosphere of textile printing works, foundries and hospitals; acrolein in the plastics and rubber industries or where there are welding operations; benzene exists in furniture finishing plants, the petrochemical industry, and where adhesives and solvents are made.

However, the added risks are not only for the workers who smoke; they also concern the passive smokers. Passive smokers — those who inhale environmental tobacco smoke but are non-smokers — is drawing concern there is an increasing awareness of its disastrous impact on health.

Since most people spend a very high proportion of their time at their place of work, exposure to environmental tobacco smoke is clearly a serious health threat.

The Jordanian Anti-Smoking Society branches in Amman, Irbid and Karak appeal

to the minister of health and all other ministers in the Jordanian government to outlaw — or at least, severely limit — smoking in the workplace.

In any situation, smoking will always add its contribution to disability and disease. But in the work place, its effective contribution can be much greater, entailing extremely high economic costs and losses for industrial communities and national economies alike.

The writer, who is an ophthalmologist, is secretary of Jordan's Anti-Smoking Society. He contributed the above article to the Jordan Times.

It just happened, almost by accident

By Celia Hall

I thought everyone would be pleased, but my colleague, the one who had borne the brunt of it, was absolutely furious. "Whaddya mean?" she raged. "If it was that easy, why didn't you stop years ago?"

I suppose my inability to explain how one afternoon I had been a packet-a-day, life-long smoker and four hours later I was not is faintly irritating. I find it curious myself. My father frankly did not believe it and phoned me three nights running to see if I had still stopped.

But an afternoon of brain bashing, a kind of mental lung washing, did the trick. The stop-smoking session was a mixture of group and hypnotherapy and it took place on March 5 exactly two months and three weeks ago. I had not intended to stop and I did not even particularly want to. For one thing, I wholly resented the remorseless pressure from the anti-smoking mob — and I still do. For another, I was pre-menopausal so still had my oestrogens to protect me against heart disease, I had low blood pressure and a long-lived and healthy family down two blood lines. I did not cough or feel unwell, and I threw off colds more easily, it seemed to me, than friends with consciously healthier styles.

On that unexceptional Thursday afternoon, I had simply gone along to the Birmingham session of Alan Carr's Easy Way to Stop Smoking to write an article about other people trying to give up. "I shan't be trying to stop myself. It would not be fair," I announced firmly. "Since my motivation for being here is writing, not stopping, it would not be right to expect your method to work on me." I could not have been more reasonable. After all, I positively enjoyed smoking. It gave me real pleasure.

I thought the counsellor looked at me rather knowingly. "Just listen, try to concentrate," he said.

We were encouraged to smoke as much as we wished and most of the afternoon was conducted in a room so smoke-filled that we had to open the windows. I noticed, with interest, that when I was told

to smoke I was reluctant to do so — and so were the others.

I suppose what happened was that the stop-smoking messages made intellectual sense. Just as smoking itself had become a challenge in the face of the opposition, so the notion of stopping began to feel attractive. The possibility of not being a smoker was beginning to make me feel powerful. It was a secret feel that had nothing to do with anyone except myself. Could I also conquer the world?

In many senses it was easy. The physical craving, the pangs of desire for nicotine, in just the same place where you feel hunger, faded after a minute or two and I experienced them over four or five days. The one activity — my work — that I thought would be the most difficult to accomplish without cigarettes did not cause a single problem. I had really believed that I would not be able to work to dead-lines unassisted by nicotine and that for the first time ever I would fail to write a story to order.

Surprisingly, pottering around at home on weekend mornings proved to be the most difficult time — and it still is. I am increasingly coming to the view that for me smoking had a great deal to do with displacing boredom; having a cigarette was an activity in itself. That, and native bloody-mindedness.

Yes, I do miss my cigarettes, but lightly. Each "new" experience as a non-smoker has to be addressed: eating out, drinking, waiting for an aeroplane, booking into a hotel, a theatre interval; all are key moments in which I would have smoked cigarettes.

I have, of course, got fatter which I detest — I'll when I last had the courage to clamber on to the bathroom scales — but so has my bank account. Holding my weight to a reasonable poundage has been a necessary adult activity; I have never been able to eat or drink at will. Now I am indulging myself with an extra helping here, or a bar of chocolate there, and reaping a flabby harvest. But if I can succeed with not smoking, then I will succeed with a diet. It is just a matter of when.

My skin is pinker; I can sing higher notes. I do not smell like a

bonfire. People have stopped asking me if I have a sore throat. Will I ever smoke again? I really

do not know, but all of a sudden the question seems not to be very important — The Independent.



Au revoir to laissez-fumer

A look at France's tough new anti-tobacco law

By Clare Pointon

The whiff of a Gauloise is set to become a less pungent part of life in France, where a strict law

banning smoking in public places comes into effect in six months. For a society in which street cafés and train platforms have traditionally been the domain of the smoker, this will be a culture shock. But for the Ministry of Health, whose figures show France has one of the highest percentages of smokers in the European Community (40 per cent of all adults in 1991), it is a long overdue reform.

Some 54,000 people die in France every year from diseases caused either by their own habit or by inhaling other people's smoke.

The so-called "Evin Law," named after a former health minister, is the toughest part of a government policy that has recently slapped higher prices on tobacco and revised the rules on advertising tobacco products. It is designed to protect the non-smoker and dissuade young people from starting the habit. It will reverse the status quo whereby French people can and do smoke everywhere unless they are expressly forbidden to do so.

From the autumn café and restaurant owners must adapt their premises to provide reasonable separation between smokers and non-smokers. The railway and underground authorities will offer only a third of their seats to smokers, who will be barred from lighting up in buffet carriages. In the workplace employers will be responsible for ensuring communal areas are smoke-free, with the option of creating ventilated "smoking zones" for those unable to get through the day without tobacco.

The penalties for those caught flouting the rules are stiff — £30-£60 for a first offence of lighting up illegally, and £120-£300 for an employer or transport authority failing to enforce the law or to put up clear no-smoking

signs.

The reaction so far in France has been mixed. The restaurant and hotel owners' association (Fédération Nationale de l'Industrie Hôtelière), which groups 80,000 independent establishments, has voiced some concern that the regulations will be difficult to enforce. What do you do with a group of smokers and non-smokers who want a table together? How do you segregate people in a way that neither spoils the aesthetics of the environment nor suggests the customer is subject to authoritarian rules?

What do you do with a group of smokers and non-smokers who want a table together? How do you segregate people in a way that neither spoils the aesthetics of the environment nor suggests the customer is subject to authoritarian rules.

The questions are particularly sensitive for the French, who pride themselves on their "civilised" tradition of *savoir-vivre*. While the country's mushrooming McDonald's chain may be happy to fix no-smoking signs to its walls, there are those in the upper echelons of the business who find the idea unacceptable.

In the celebrated Maxim's restaurant in Paris, where Friday night dinner is accompanied by

an orchestra and black tie is de rigueur, the assistant manager, Gérard, Mar, 31, says such signs would be completely out of place. He says the restaurant's clients refrain from smoking during the peak dining period anyway, and would be put out if the restaurant was reorganised so that they could not sit at their usual tables.

Jacqueline Milan, owner of the intellectual and show biz haunt La Closerie de Lilas, goes further. She says the government should stop importing tobacco if it is seriously concerned about people's health — and not make restaurant owners pay for the fact that tobacco is legal. But at the 24-hour Au Pied du Cochon restaurant in central Paris, the director, Jean-François Lecerf, who says 80 per cent of his customers are smokers, supports the law. On his premises, which are laid out on several floors, he says it would be perfectly possible to separate those who smoke and those who do not.

The most sensitive area of the law is likely to be the ban on smoking in communal workplaces. Surely, say critics, the ruling gives those in top management positions, with the luxury of their own office, the chance to indulge their habit, while those lower down the hierarchical ladder — who may feel just as strong an urge to light up — have to wait for a lunch or tea-break? What about the danger that employers will become more likely to hire non-smokers?

At first sight the law appears to break with France's traditional *laissez-faire* attitude towards most forms of social behaviour. However, some may feel smoking is one area in which measures to curtail the celebrated Gallic "freedom of the individual" are necessary so as to protect the freedom of that individual's neighbour — The Independent.

Arafat in Syria for talks

(Continued from page 1)

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir of the right-wing Likud Party.

Asked by a reporter whether he thought it would take so long to resolve the issue, Rabin suggested that the U.S.-brokered peace talks could be pursued more seriously.

The talks which began last October in Madrid have often bogged down in procedural arguments, Mr. Rabin noted. What is needed is "a more serious approach to negotiations, not exchanging letters once every month and a half," he said.

He said the government needed to suppress terrorism, "to show that by force, and knives, firebombs and rock throwing, they will not obtain not one millimetre of territory."

But he added that Israel had to stick fast to its proposals to grant Palestinians self-rule or limited autonomy, an interim solution. By autonomy, Israel would not give up its handling of security matters and Jewish settlements, "but let them control their lives."

Labour's platform calls for territorial compromise with the Arabs while Likud maintains the occupied lands are integral parts of "historic" Israel.

Renewed fighting erupts in Kabul

(Continued from page 1)

Soviet aircraft, which almost killed Afghanistan's first Mujahideen president.

Mr. Hekmatyar has refused to participate in Mr. Mojaddidi's government and has been outspoken in his criticism of the 70-year-old president and his unabashed support of Gen. Dostum, the leader of the force Uzbek militia that engineered the fall of ousted President Najibullah's government last month and then prevented Mr. Hekmatyar's forces from seizing power.

Mr. Hekmatyar has demanded that Dostum's forces withdraw from Kabul and return to their base in northern Afghanistan and has vowed to keep fighting. The two groups have frequently clashed in the past month, leaving scores of people dead and hundreds wounded.

But other rebel leaders have become increasingly critical of

Mr. Mojaddidi in recent weeks, accusing him of trying to hang onto power. Mr. Mojaddidi the head of a 50-member transitional council, is scheduled to turn over power in late June to a supreme leadership council that will organise nationwide elections.

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Switzerland joins IMF

WASHINGTON (AP) — Switzerland became a member of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Friday, the fund announced, bringing its membership to 164 countries.

Switzerland's contribution will be worth \$2.36 billion, so that the fund's total resources will be the equivalent of \$129.12 billion. The fund in recent years has been lending mainly to Third World countries, in return for promises of changes in their economic policies.

Now it has begun to take a similar role in changing the economies of the countries that used to make up the Soviet Union away from the communist system and toward Western-style open

markets and private ownership. Six former Soviet republics have become members in recent weeks: The three Baltic states — Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania — as well as Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia.

The other nine republics, including Russia, have all applied for membership and are expected to be admitted as they complete the formalities.

Switzerland, a leading member of the world financial community, has long cooperated with the fund, but its 700-year-old tradition of neutrality has kept it from joining. Earlier this month, Swiss voters accepted membership in a referendum.

Financial Markets

Jordan Times
in co-operation with
Cairo Amman Bank

| Currency | New York Close 29/5/92 | New York Close 28/5/92 |
|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Swelling Pound | 1.8285 | 1.8050 |
| Deutsche Mark | 1.6080 | 1.6270 |
| Swiss Franc | 1.4570 | 1.4768 |
| French Franc | 5.4010 | 5.4625 |
| Japanese Yen | 127.60 | 129.60 |
| European Currency Unit | 1.2785 | 1.2665 |

Source: The NYSE
* Exchange Closing at 4:00 a.m. GMT

Currency Interest Rates

| Currency | 3 MONTH | 6 MONTH | 12 MONTH | 12 MONTH |
|------------------------|---------|---------|----------|----------|
| U.S. Dollar | 3.81 | 4.00 | 4.09 | 4.59 |
| Swelling Pound | 10.00 | 10.00 | 9.87 | 9.87 |
| Deutsche Mark | 9.68 | 9.68 | 9.68 | 9.56 |
| Swiss Franc | 9.37 | 9.37 | 9.06 | 8.68 |
| French Franc | 9.87 | 9.87 | 9.81 | 9.75 |
| Japanese Yen | 4.75 | 4.62 | 4.59 | 4.59 |
| European Currency Unit | 10.12 | 10.12 | 10.13 | 10.06 |

Source: Bank of England
* Bank of England rates for currencies excluding U.S. Dollar, Japan and Switzerland

Precious Metals

| Metal | UNIT | PRICE | UNIT | PRICE |
|-----------|------|--------|------|--------|
| Gold | 100g | 336.80 | 100g | 6.60 |
| Silver | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Platinum | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Palladium | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Rhodium | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Iridium | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Rosinium | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Antimony | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Vanadium | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Chromium | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Manganese | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Iron | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Copper | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Nickel | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Zinc | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Lead | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Aluminum | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Magnesium | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Titanium | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Vanadium | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Chromium | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Manganese | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Iron | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Copper | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Nickel | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Zinc | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Lead | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Aluminum | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Magnesium | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Titanium | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |

Source: The NYSE
* Exchange Closing at 4:00 a.m. GMT

Other Currencies

| Currency | UNIT | PRICE | UNIT | PRICE |
|--------------------|------|---------|------|---------|
| U.S. Dollar | 100g | 0.6780 | 100g | 0.6800 |
| Swelling Pound | 100g | 1.2381 | 100g | 1.2443 |
| Deutsche Mark | 100g | 0.4213 | 100g | 0.4213 |
| Swiss Franc | 100g | 0.4653 | 100g | 0.4636 |
| French Franc | 100g | 0.1255 | 100g | 0.1261 |
| Japanese Yen | 100g | 0.5306 | 100g | 0.5333 |
| Dutch Guilder | 100g | 0.3740 | 100g | 0.3759 |
| South African Rand | 100g | 0.1170 | 100g | 0.1176 |
| Italian Lira | 100g | 0.0559 | 100g | 0.0562 |
| Belgian Lira | 100g | 0.02047 | 100g | 0.02057 |

Source: The NYSE
* Exchange Closing at 4:00 a.m. GMT

C.A.T. Indices for Amman Financial Market

| Index | 27.5.92 | 20.5.92 | Change |
|------------------|---------|---------|--------|
| All-Share | 140.66 | 142.74 | 2.08 |
| Banking Sector | 104.48 | 105.51 | 1.03 |
| Insurance Sector | 150.72 | 151.35 | 0.63 |
| Industry Sector | 191.90 | 195.00 | 3.10 |
| Services Sector | 172.08 | 179.36 | 7.28 |

Source: The NYSE
* Exchange Closing at 4:00 a.m. GMT

Fate of Jordan-Gulf, Al Mashrek banks awaits final decision

By Salam Shawwa
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) is considering four definite and final offers to buy Jordan-Gulf Bank (JGB) which has incurred JD35 million in bad debts and therefore has caused severe financial troubles, especially liquidity strains, over the past few years.

According to a senior JGB official, the four offers cover both JGB and Al Mashrek Bank which are expected to be merged in the coming two weeks.

The senior banker said that JGB was undergoing a restructuring process over the past few months and he pointed out that JGB was recently merged with the Syrian Jordanian Bank which was also facing financial troubles.

He elaborated that the new entity, which would include three merged banks, would be based on more solid and sound foundation.

Waleed Asfour, head of the management committee which was appointed by a decision

from the Economic Security Committee in 1989, said that JGB was entering a critical point in its operations.

Mr. Asfour said the bank has supplied all concerned parties with detailed information about JGB and that the buying offers cover two options:

1) Buying the bank as an entity requiring further restructuring under the laws and regulations of the CBJ, or

2) Creating a new financial entity with a JD10 million capital whereby the new bank, under a new name, would carry all the bad debts of the bank.

Mr. Asfour attributed JGB's bad loans to heavy lending by the bank to the transportation sector in the '80s. He said JGB exceeded its lending limits and had problems in getting the debtors to repay back the large sums they have borrowed.

He denied that JGB's financial records were false or that the collaterals for loans were insufficient adding that the problems of the bank were far less serious than those of the former Petra Bank.

JGB's General Manager

Waleed Khairallah explained that a proposal to buy the bank was first floated eight months ago when the Jordanian Expatriates Holding Establishment has shown interest in a deal. The discussions with the group did not achieve much, he added, until three more parties entered the race to buy the bank.

"It is getting very serious and we anticipate a decision very soon," he noted.

Mr. Khairallah said the mergers and the sale of JGB were in line with the CBJ policy to reduce the number of banks in the Kingdom.

The general manager referred to the recent strike threats by the bank employees for higher pay and stressed that the bank intends to keep all its employees at all branches without any reduction whatsoever.

He said that the bank would abide by the decision of the compromising council to which the dispute was referred. He urged the employees to show the necessary understanding of the transitory period the bank is going through.

'Black money' rules in Bangladesh economy

DHAKA (R) — "Black money" mostly the proceeds of illegal trade which are used to bribe officials, accounts for about 31 per cent of Bangladesh's gross national product (GNP), a newspaper reported Friday.

"The size of the black money... will be around 250 billion taka (over \$6 billion)," the New Nation said, quoting an undated World Bank survey.

"With the gross national product calculated at 800 billion taka (\$20 billion) the influence of black money, being slightly over 31 per cent of the GNP, is tremendous," the paper said.

A World Bank study on "corruption, bribery and smuggling and their influence on the general economy of Bangladesh" showed that black money was a major impediment to the growth of the private sector, the newspaper said.

The study found that it took more than three years to obtain government permission to set up an industry in Bangladesh.

Such a delay "encourages extra unofficial payments and bribery... which is often as high as five per cent of the total turnover of the industry," the newspaper quoted the World Bank report as saying.

The black economy covers areas of export and import, insurance, industry, legal sector, bribery and smuggling," the report noted.

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia said recently that Bangladesh's switch to a free market economy is paying off and the country is finally able to pay more for its own development.

"(The) free market economy is now the global trend and we are rapidly building ourselves up linking our economy with this trend," she said.

"Dividends are being gradually reaped from this measure," she told a national seminar of economists, journalists and businessmen.

Bangladesh, one of the world's poorest countries, has an annual per capita income of \$170.

It received nearly \$16 billion over the last 10 years from international agencies to finance development projects, according to government figures.

Mrs. Khaleda, who took power after winning parliamentary elections in February 1991, blames the current economic chaos on former President Hussain Mohammad Ershad, who doled out large sums in unprotected bank loans to his cronies.

Mrs. Khaleda said her aim was to restore economic discipline and ensure the accountability expected of a democratic government. She has already cracked down on bank loan defaulters.

She said her government aimed to increase the national income and alleviate poverty.

"We have ousted one autocrat," she said.



Khaleda Zia

cy. Another tyrant remains. And that tyrant is poverty," she said. "We must ensure that-bhaat (rice and lentils) for the people. (rice and lentils) for the people. (rice and lentils) for the people."

Finance Minister Saifur Rahman has said he will propose cutting thousands of jobs from the government payroll when he announces Bangladesh's annual budget next month.

"The size of the government would be reduced to ensure optimum use of limited resources and bring efficiency to the state machinery," he said at a pre-budget discussion last week.

"But the task would not be easy," the pro-government Telegraph newspaper quoted him as saying.

"There has been widespread unemployment... and throwing many people out of employment would create an adverse impact," he pointed out.

Spending on government salaries had increased six-fold in the past few years to 78 billion taka (\$1.95 billion), he said.

Clothing, footwear post highest rise in Jordan's '91 cost of living index

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The All Items Cost of Living Index rose to 168.1 points in 1991 from 155.4 points in 1990, but the increase was lower than the 21.8 points registered in 1990 above the 1989 figures. The relatively lower increase reflects what most analysts describe as a gradual stabilisation of prices after the upheavals created by the Gulf crisis, according to Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) statistics.

The comfort that the stabilisation trend offers is only momentary before taking a closer look at the sector-by-sector rise since 1989. All indices were set at 100 in 1986, with the pointed decline from the oil boom which led to changes in the living patterns and demand and supply situations in the Kingdom.

Some economists argue that the indices followed by the CBJ are not fully realistic, when taking into consideration the actual price rises in the market and the increases reflected in the statistical figures. They say that the index structure is outdated and call for an entirely new set of parameters to draw up new indices based on the "shifting priorities" of the average Jordanian citizen.

"It is a matter of how you look at it and set the basis ingredients for an index," said one analyst.

"For instance, indices drawn up years ago on the basis of the prices of certain items and their priority status in daily lives need updating after including new items as well as the receding or emerging priority status of needs."

But Dr. Fahed Fanek, a noted economist and columnist for the Jordan Times, disagrees with this view. "The indices set by the authorities are realistic and are the best available measurement for the cost of living of limited income families," he said.

The indices do not represent inflation figures since the very setting of inflation figures involves numerous other elements which "do not come into the lives of limited income families," Dr. Fanek pointed out.

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come families" and cannot be seen as a realistic indicator of construction costs or high rents in some of the Amman suburbs.

Despite the calls and arguments, the fact remains that the only source for basic data to go by is the indices set in 1986.

On the basis of the 1986 indices, CBJ statistics indicate that the largest rise was in the general index for clothing and footwear, registering an increase of 54.4 points between 1989 and 1990 and 26.3 points between 1990 and 1991. The separate index for clothing rose by 68.7 points between 1989 and 1991 and for footwear by 45.5 points.

The general index for food items went up from 125.5 points in 1989 to 151.2 in 1990 and 167.9 in 1991. A split-up showed that the cereals and bakery price index rose from 101.1 to 110.3 in 1990 and 124.1 in 1991; meat and fish from 120.5 to 165.5 in 1990 and 179.7 in 1991; fruits from 174 to 183.2 in 1990 and 223.6 in 1991. Vegetables from 136.9 points to 131.1 points in 1990 and 156.7 in 1991.

The dairy products and eggs index went up from 125.9 to 153.8 in 1990 and 165.2 in 1991 while another covering other food items rose from 123.6 points to 146.5 in 1990 and 161.5 in 1991.

The drinks and tobacco index registered an increase of 19.2 points, rising from 140.2 to 155.9 in 1990 and 159.4 in 1991.

The general housing index went up from 117.6 to 130.9 in 1990 and 138.2 in 1991, while the separate fuels and utilities index rose from 100.9 to 105.7 in 1990 and 114.7 in 1991. The fuels and utilities index is expected to register a dramatic increase in 1992, after the government increased the prices of heating fuels by up to 40 per cent in February this year.

The separate housing index, which is cited by many as not reflecting the actual shooting up of rents in the wake of the return home of over quarter million expatriates, showed an increase of 14 points only between 1989 and 1991, from 110.2 to 118.3 in 1990 and 124.2 in 1991.

The housing index — which includes cleaning and maintenance expenses in addition to rent, but excludes cost of housing units — rose by another 3.5 points and the fuel and utilities index grew by 3.1 points in the first two months of this year.

CBJ Governor Mohammad Saeed Al Nabulsi said earlier this month that inflation during the first quarter of 1992 was 4.2 per cent. The annual inflation was 8.2 per cent in 1991, 16.1 per cent in 1990 and 25.8 per cent in 1989.

An index related to "others" within the housing sector increased from 154 points to 190.3 in 1990 and 199.9 in 1991.

The general index for other goods and services registered an increase from 153.8 points in 1989 to 167.9 in 1990 and 175.7 in 1991.

Within this category, the transportation index went up from 158.3 points to 164.1 in 1990 and 171.6 in 1991; medical care from 141.5 in 1989 to 147.7 in 1990 and 160.8 in 1991; personal care from 180.9 in 1989 to 218.7 in 1990 and 217.8 in 1991; education from 119.6 in 1989 to 123.8 in 1990 and 131.2 in 1991; others from 198.2 in 1989 to 246.3 in 1990 and 262.3 in 1991.

According to official statistics, the All-Items Index grew by 7.2 points to 175.3 in the first two months of 1992. Similarly, the general food items index grew by 10.4 points to 178.3, the cereals and bakery products by 1.1 to 125.2, meat and fish by 10.9 points to 192.6, vegetables by 44.7 points to 201.4; dairy products and eggs by 11.6 to 177.6; other foodstuffs by 5.3 points to 166.8 by the end of February 1992.

The only decline in the food category during this period was registered in the index on fruits, which went down by 20.3 points to 203.3. Analysts said, however, the drop was not indicative of a long-term trend since the price decline was seasonal.

They pointed out that fruit and vegetable prices shot up to unprecedented levels in March as a result of damages caused to crops by snowstorms but are now back to almost normal.

Clothing was a sector where the rise was pronounced, registering an increase of 16.4 points to 290.5 while footwear went up by 0.6 points to 188.8. The general index for clothing and footwear saw an increase of 13.5 points of 271.6.

Education, personal care, medical care and transportation went up respectively by 3.7 points, 1.2 points, 4.3 points and 6.4 points while the general goods and services index rose by 4.2 points in the first two months of this year.

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California economy slides

SAN FRANCISCO (R) — California's economy remains mired in its worst recession since the 1930s, and the recent Los Angeles riots may slow any recovery in the most populous U.S. state.

Economists say there are few signs of life in the California economy, the largest of the 50 states, even as other parts of the United States show some revival after a long, bumpy recession.

The recent riots after the Rodney King verdict only add to the state's uncertainties.

"It's just going to be a longer and bumper ride," said Joseph Wabed, chief economist at Wells Fargo Bank. "There is little evidence of a recovery in California at this time."

California Governor Pete Wilson has warned that the new budget to close the state's deficit, now estimated at \$10.7 billion, would be painful for all Californians.

"This is a time of unprecedented cutting and it will be unpleasant and painful," Mr. Wilson said in a speech to a business group.

He said California will officially be broke by July 1, the beginning of its fiscal year, unless the budget is passed by the June 15 deadline.

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Bush will not sign Earth Summit treaty on plants, animals

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — President George Bush won't sign what his administration is calling a "fundamentally flawed" Earth Summit treaty to protect the world's plants, animals and natural resources.

The State Department announced the administration's decision on the "biodiversity" treaty in a brief statement late Friday, less than a week before the scheduled start of a U.N. Environmental Conference in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil.

The draft treaty, which had been worked out last week by 98 nations at a conference in Nairobi, Kenya, would set forth a long-term plan for protecting plants, animals and natural resources.

It's one of two key international agreements that will be considered by representatives from 160 countries at the Rio conference June 3-14. The other treaty, which the United States is expected to sign, is aimed at taking the first steps to address global warming.

Despite U.S. opposition to the treaty on animals and plants, the agreement is likely to get the required support from 30 nations needed for it to go into effect.

The State Department said the United States "cannot sign an agreement that is fundamentally flawed merely for the sake of having that agreement." The department posted the statement after most reporters in the building had left for the day.

The administration objected to how the plant and animal protection programme would be financed, complaining that the proposed treaty gives developing nations too much say on funding procedures under the auspices of

the World Bank.

Mr. Bush plans to make an appearance at the Brazil summit, and the White House said earlier that he will announce plans next week to help tropical countries preserve the forests.

That action, however, is unlikely to blunt criticism from environmentalists over the administration's opposition to the plant and animal protection accord.

Environmentalists criticised the draft accord and accused the U.S. delegation of watering it down.

The proposal of technical and other aid to preserve tropical rain forests is intended to divert some of the focus from the fact that the United States had pushed through a draft global warming treaty that contains no specific greenhouse gas reduction requirements.

European countries argued for a much stronger agreement on global warming, with specific deadlines for reduction of so-called greenhouse gases. They agreed to sign Mr. Bush's version, which includes only suggested goals, after he threatened to boycott the summit.

Earth Summit organiser Maurice Strong lashed back Friday at critics who said he was too cozy with big business and insisted that next week's U.N. meeting could only succeed if companies got the "green" message.

More than 100 heads of state and government are due to attend the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development and sign agreements to protect the world's air, seas and forests.

Environmentalists have attack-

ed Mr. Strong, a Canadian oil millionaire, for paying too much attention to multinationals and accepting sponsorship from companies with dubious records on pollution.

"I've often been criticised that my links with business are too close," Mr. Strong told a meeting of the Business Council for Sustainable Development, a group of companies which has drawn up a charter for "green" business.

"Well I ask you: How can you envisage a change of course to sustainable development without making the business community peers and allies? It simply can't be done."

Mr. Strong was speaking after receiving reports and books outlining the business community's ideas for the Earth Summit from Stephan Schmidheiny, a Swiss industrialist who set up the business council last year with the participation of 48 leaders of major companies around the world.

Mr. Schmidheiny said the report's main message was that capitalism and conservation could go hand in hand. "Business excellence and environmental concern can be combined," he said. "In fact, in the near future, it will be impossible to separate the two."

Tomorrow's corporate winners, he added, would be the companies which were most "eco-efficient" — the ones that produced the most useful goods and services while reducing their consumption of natural resources and cutting pollution.

Mr. Schmidheiny called for open international trade to reduce environmental damage caused by misguided subsidies and suggested that governments

could bring in tradeable "pollution permits" and extra taxes to nudge companies in the right direction.

In a separate development, while world leaders confer at the Earth Summit, just down the road some of Hollywood's finest will rub shoulders with Amazon tribesmen and talk to the Dalai Lama.

An alternative summit in downtown Rio organised by environmental groups is proving a magnet for the rich and famous. Organisers for the alternative meeting, known as the Global Forum, say the following celebrities have confirmed they are coming, although there may be other surprises.

— Jane Fonda and her media magnate husband Ted Turner will take part in a parliamentary Earth Summit, where legislators, religious leaders, businessmen and others will try to put a human face on the decisions of the official summit, which starts on June 3.

— Hollywood stars Liv Ullmann and Shirley MacLaine will join various groups at the alternative summit site.

— Singer John Denver and U.S. Senator Al Gore will take part in the parliamentary Earth Summit.

— Norway's Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, a prime mover for the Earth Summit, will be a regular participant, along with Tibet's spiritual leader the Dalai Lama.

— Others expected to be seen during the two-week event include singers Olivia Newton-John, Sting and Elton John, actress Meryl Streep, globe-trotting environmentalist Jacques Cousteau and Brazilian folk hero Pele.

Thai police general wants army against coup

BANGKOK (R) — A Thai police general who witnessed the bloody army suppression of pro-democracy demonstrators has warned the army that another coup could plunge Thailand into civil war, local papers said Saturday.

The comments by Major General Uthai Assavavilai were the strongest yet from a senior member of the security forces after soldiers killed scores of people when they fired on demonstrators from May 17 to 20.

"I think that if there is another coup people will come out and fight. There will be a civil war because no one will give into the other," Gen. Uthai was quoted as saying.

"The soldiers should come to their senses and listen the voice of their people for a change," he said.

The shootings shocked the nation and brought the downfall of unelected Prime Minister General Suchinda Kraprayoon.

A week after Gen. Suchinda quit in disgrace, Thailand remains without a leader and the military leaders who backed him are rescinding demands that they face retribution.

Gen. Uthai criticised the soldiers who stormed Bangkok's Royal Hotel, beat people with rifle butts and kicked them as they lay prostrate on the ground.

"The brutality took place before the very eyes of military commanders who did nothing to stop them," he said.

Gen. Uthai said his daughter, a reporter, was in the Royal Hotel at the time and he was there in civilian clothes. When he identified himself as a senior police official and protested, he was told: "Shut your mouth," he said.

Gen. Uthai, a former Special Branch commander sidelined in a reshuffle in 1989, is facing an investigation into earlier critical remarks he made.

His latest comments were widely reported in local newspapers and by the Thai News Agency.

More than 3,000 people were arrested in the demonstrations though most have now been released.

The pro-democracy activists are demanding that Gen. Suchinda, Armed Forces Supreme Commander Air Chief Marshal Kasit Rajanani and Army Chief General Issaraporn Noonphakdee stand trial for murder.

Parliament has appointed a fact-finding committee to investigate the killings.

The officer corps has closed ranks around its leaders, who have warned they should not be turned into "cornered dogs" — a statement seen by many as a veiled threat.

Gen. Suchinda, then army chief, led a military coup in February 1991 that toppled a democratically elected government.

He took over as prime minister on the invitation of a coalition of pro-military parties without having stood in March elections.

One of Thailand's most respected ex-generals, opposition leader Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, said Friday he was confident he could form a minority government.

Ramos claim of election victory slammed by foes

MANILA (R) — Front-runner Fidel Ramos calmed victory Saturday in the Philippine presidential election, but rivals slammed the west Point-trained general and urged him to wait for Congress to declare the winner. Gen. Ramos, the favoured successor of President Corason Aquino, vowed in a news conference to unite a country racked by a Communist insurgency, military factionalism, a stagnant economy, and crippling 12-hour electric power blackouts.

"I now claim victory in the presidential contest," the 64-year-old former defence chief declared while the Philippine Congress, which is authorised to count and proclaim the winner, was still laboriously tabulating the vote.

Gabriel Villareal, lawyer of rival candidate and business tycoon Eduardo Cojuangco, called the self-proclamation a "shortcut" done in haste.

"Let's respect the constitution which mandates Congress to proclaim the winner," Villareal said.

Anti-graft crusader Miriam Santiago, who is running second in unofficial returns, said Saturday she would push ahead with planned nationwide rallies to protest against alleged vote-rigging by the government in favour of Gen. Ramos.

She warned Congress against being stampeded into proclaiming Gen. Ramos as the winner. She alleged there was widespread fraud, and it would take time to uncover.

But presidential Executive Secretary Franklin Drilon defended Gen. Ramos, saying his proclamation of victory "is the right thing to do so the concern of people will be removed that no president will be proclaimed on time."

Congress is not expected to finish the count until about the middle of June, lawmakers said. President Aquino steps down on June 30 after a stormy six-year term.

"Though the votes for me represent a plurality of all those cast, I regard the wide margin between



Fidel Ramos

me and the second highest contender as the unmistakable decision of Filipino voters in my favour," Gen. Ramos said, adding that he had clearly won the bitter seven-cornered battle for the presidency.

Gen. Ramos grabbed a commanding lead over his rivals in the officially-sanctioned Media Citizens' Quick Count (MCQC), which has finished counting 82 per cent of the estimated 25 million votes cast in the polls.

Gen. Ramos had 4,895 million votes to Mrs. Santiago's 3,910 million. In third place was Mr. Cojuangco, 243,049 votes behind Mrs. Santiago with 3,667 million votes.

"I'm very happy," declared the leader of the 1986 "people power" revolt who kept Mrs. Aquino in office through five coup attempts by marines troops. He arrived at his news conference after donating blood to the Red Cross.

Gen. Ramos was already working on his cabinet, and had two meetings this week with Senator Juan Ponce Enrile, the former defence minister of the Philippines for 17 years who won a congressional seat in his home province of Cagayan, he said.

Election officials have admitted that there have been instances of ballot rigging, but insist it was not widespread.

Gen. Ramos inherits an economy hit hard by a severe power crisis that has caused huge losses to businesses, deteriorating infrastructure and a staggering \$29 billion foreign debt.

U.S. says arms talks make only modest gains

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States said the world's top five arms-exporting nations did not reach agreement in two days of talks here that ended Friday on implementing guidelines for curbing conventional arms sale to the Middle East.

The United States, Russia, Britain, France and China held two days of talks on an initiative to curb arms sales to the Middle East launched by President George Bush a year ago after the Gulf war.

A key goal has been pre-notification of weapons transfers but a senior U.S. official said the five nations "have experienced some legal and diplomatic difficulties in moving right away to advance notification."

The official, who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity, said that during their talks at the State Department the five countries settled on "interim" guidelines concerning transfers of weapons of mass destruction.

But, asked if this represented a breakthrough, he said: "No. I would represent the events of the last two days as continued progress in a process that is not

moving as rapidly as we might like but a process that a year ago didn't exist and ... that many people thought couldn't come into existence."

The official also said three of the five countries had begun exchanging data on 1991 arms sales, with the two others expected to follow in June.

The official said the guidelines on weapons of mass destruction reflected progress in part because they represented a public commitment by China in a multilateral forum not to transfer ballistic missiles covered by the missile technology control regime (MTCR). The MTCR was established to curb sales of destabilising arms to the Third World.

China had previously made the commitment in an exchange of letters with the United States.

Lee Feinstein of the Arms Control Association told Reuters the wording of the guidelines seemed somewhat vague on this point. But "it is indeed a pledge by China to adhere to the MTCR, then it is the most public commitment they have made," he said.

Russian military arms both Armenia, Azerbaijan

TBILISI, Georgia (AP) — The Russian army will turn over former Soviet weapons to the warring countries of Azerbaijan and Armenia, a senior Russian officer said Friday.

Georgia, which has been battling separatists in the South Ossetia region, also will get a share of the Red Army weapons.

"We have reached an agreement to hand over arms and ammunition to Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia in equal shares," said Col. Gen. Valery Patrikeyev, commander of the Transcaucasian military district.

All three republics have been clamouring for equipment and supplies since the breakup of the Soviet Union in December. Like Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova and other former Soviet republics, they say they are entitled to most or all of the conventional forces stationed on their soil.

Russia is in the difficult position of keeping or doing out the weapons, because the former Soviet troops in the Caucasus mountains were transferred to Russian jurisdiction earlier this year.

Gen. Patrikeyev didn't elaborate on the number of arms to be given to the Caucasus states, or the timetable for their delivery.

Georgia's acting prime minister, Tengiz Sigua, told reporters after a meeting with Russian commanders that Georgia will receive ships from the Black Sea Fleet that are based in the Georgian ports of Batumi, Poti and Ochamchira.

Ukraine and Russia have been arguing over the bulk of the 300-ship fleet, based in the Ukrainian port of Sevastopol.

Mr. Sigua said Russian commanders also agreed to give Georgia several dozen armoured vehicles, 2,000 Kalashnikov assault rifles, 2,000 pistols and 1 million rounds of ammunition for various kinds of arms.

"The meeting signifies the beginning of the transfer of property from the former Soviet army to Georgia," Mr. Sigua said.

He added that the Russian military command agreed to withdraw a helicopter regiment and army engineers' unit from South Ossetia, where separatist are battling to break away from Georgia and unite with their ethnic brethren in North Ossetia, part of Russia.

A ceasefire had been scheduled to go into effect in South Ossetia at midnight Thursday, but the fighting continued through the night, killing six people and wounding 11, the Moscow-based Nega News Agency reported Friday.

Gen. Patrikeyev said Russia is negotiating agreements with all three Caucasus states on the status of Russian troops remaining in the region.

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

Indian missile test imperfect

NEW DELHI (R) — India's second test of its medium-range Agni missile was not the complete success first thought, the government's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) said. The first phase of Friday's launch into the Bay of Bengal from Chandipur-On-Sea on the east coast went well, but there was trouble with the second stage, it said. "Later analysis shows that the mission objective of the final manoeuvring could not be fulfilled due to the premature ignition and separation of the second stage," the DRDO said. "That means it didn't hit its target," a Western defence specialist said. The United States, worried about the spread of missile technology, especially in South Asia where old enemies India and Pakistan are believed capable of assembling a nuclear bomb, condemned the first Agni test in May, 1989. It did so again after Friday's second test. "We regret India's decision to proceed with the further testing of its IRBM (intermediate-range ballistic missile) called the Agni," State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said in Washington. "We believe that ballistic missile programmes in areas where there are chronic regional tensions undermine, rather than enhance regional security," he told reporters.

Japanese agree on bill for overseas troops

TOKYO (R) — The Japanese government's controversial U.N. peacekeeping bills are finally set to go to the vote next week, in a climax to two years of struggle that could trigger a snap election. Leaders of Japan's ruling and small centrist opposition parties agreed Friday on details of bills that would allow Japanese troops to serve overseas as U.N. peacekeepers — but with considerable limitations. The new bills would ban Japanese troops from taking part in combat duties such as missions to separate warring factions, ruling and opposition party officials said. It would also require the government to seek parliamentary approval each time before sending troops, they said. The ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) needs the votes of both the middle-of-the-road Democratic Socialist Party and the Buddhist-backed Komeito to gain a majority in the upper house to pass the bills which they plan to put to a vote next week. The bills, to be reviewed after three years, will be submitted to the upper house Monday, party officials said. They passed the lower house in December.

Dante Fascell to retire from Congress

WASHINGTON (USA) — Dante Fascell, chairman of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, has announced that he will not seek reelection in November. Mr. Fascell, a Democrat from Florida, has been one of the foremost foreign policy experts in Congress during much of his 37 legislative years. His departure, along with that of the senior Republican on his panel, William Broomfield, will take from the House two highly regarded lawmakers who have done much to promote U.S. foreign policy with an even hand since Mr. Fascell became chairman in 1984. Despite disagreements with the administrations of Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush, Mr. Fascell presided over a committee that supported U.S. foreign and defence policy at critical times. Mr. Fascell's resignation comes as he nears the end of his 19th term as representative in Congress from his Miami district.

Queen Elizabeth ends visit to Malta

VALLETTA (R) — Several thousand people and more than 100 pleasure boats in Valletta's Grand Harbour gave Britain's Queen Elizabeth a noisy send-off Saturday after her three-day state visit to Malta. The boats sounded horns and blew jets of water into the air as the royal yacht Britannia, with the queen and the duke of Edinburgh on board, sailed for the Sicilian capital Palermo. The royal couple will then fly home to London. The visit celebrated the 50th anniversary of the award to the island of Britain's highest civil award for gallantry, the George Cross, during World War II. The queen last visited Malta 25 years ago.

Vietnam appoints new ministers

HANOI (R) — A cabinet reshuffle Thursday was intended to rescue the Vietnamese government's image before National Assembly elections, a Vietnamese official said Saturday. "It is a necessary thing to be done before the elections to save the prestige of the council of minister and politburo," said the official, who asked not to be identified. New ministers of justice and finance were appointed at the end of a three-day meeting of the council of state Thursday, official newspapers reported Saturday. Vietnam's National Assembly elections are scheduled for July 19. Nguyen Dinh Loc was appointed minister of justice, replacing Phan Hien, while Deputy Finance Minister Ho Te, was promoted to minister of finance replacing Hoang Quy.

FBI joins probe into Italian judge's murder

ROME (R) — FBI agents Saturday joined the investigation into the murder of leading anti-mafia fighter Giovanni Falcone, whose death was cheered and applauded by gangsters in a Palermo jail, officials said.

Under pressure from magistrates battling the mafia on the Sicilian front-line, the Rome cabinet was preparing a package of stringent laws and decrees against organised crime.

Six agents from the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) flew to Palermo to meet investigators probing last Saturday's killing of Falcone, his wife and three bodyguards.

"Any help we can get must be seen as useful. The FBI men are more than welcome," said one Italian investigator before the crime-fighters met Saturday. Mr. Falcone had cooperated on several U.S. mafia cases including the Pizza connection trial into drugs-trafficking.

In Rome, a spokesman for the Justice Ministry said inmates at Palermo's top-security Ucciardone Jail, where gangsters including former godfather Michele Greco are held, broke into applause and cheered when they saw first reports of the murder on the evening television news.

Bush: Riots show need for 'new course' in America

LOS ANGELES (R) — President George Bush said Friday riots in Los Angeles showed the need for a "new course" in America that stresses law and order, traditional family values and a broad reform of social programmes.

Mr. Bush walked a fine line between presidential leadership and reelection politics during his second visit to California's largest city since bloody race riots exploded after a jury acquitted four white policemen in the videotaped beating of black motorist Rodney King.

In a speech to a civic forum that was supposed to be non-partisan, Mr. Bush was introduced by close friend and campaign fund-raiser Lodrick Cook who took a thinly veiled swipe at Texas billionaire, businessman Ross Perot, the undeclared presidential candidate who is leading the polls in this crucial state.

"Many of us in this room have jobs of great responsibility and scope, but it is a quantum leap to go from being a CEO (chief executive officer) of a large company, or head of a large public institution to being head of this country," Mr. Cook said.

Mr. Bush, who began his day with a visit to a disaster assistance centre in riot-torn south-central Los Angeles, said the worst civil disturbance since the civil war "made clear the great unfinished business we have as a nation."

"We've got to strike a new course," he said.

The president said the upheaval that shook the city showed the need for greater emphasis on law and order and a sweeping overhaul of social programmes that he said lock the poor into an endless cycle of hopelessness and despair.

Dismissing Democratic charges that an appeal to law and order is a code word for racial divisiveness, Mr. Bush declared, "There is nothing racist, there is nothing divisive, about protecting decent people from crime. Making neighbourhoods safe isn't politics. It's just plain simple decency."

Mr. Bush has advocated welfare reforms that would not force a family to break up to qualify or penalise them for trying to work and save. He would also give tax breaks to investors who risk their money in the inner cities.

But he said that "laws and budgets" are not enough.

"We need a moral, and yes, a spiritual revival in our nation," Mr. Bush said, touching on one of the main themes in his campaign for a second four-year term in the White House. "The federal government cannot teach values, but it can create an environment where they take root and grow."

After the speech, Mr. Bush sought a political boost from a meeting with former President Ronald Reagan at Mr. Reagan's

swank Beverly Hills office. Mr. Bush last met Mr. Reagan three months ago but the former president left the impression that his support was only half-hearted, refusing to be photographed with Mr. Bush.

Running 30 minutes late after his motorcade got stuck in freeway rush-hour traffic, Mr. Bush later stopped by the Lynwood Sheriff's Athletic League, which sponsors a boxing programme and other sports events for inner city young people.

During a round-table discussion, Mr. Bush asked Sheriff Sherman Block if L.A. gang members took part in activities.

"Some of the gang members come here to show how tough they are," he replied. "When they get knocked on their butts, they realise there's a difference between fighting and boxing."

Sheriff Block said that for many youngsters "the gangs substitute for the family, the church."

"Unless there are programmes like this, we can't really compete with the gangs," he said.

The Los Angeles Times reported Friday that Mr. Bush and his staff were more dispirited and frustrated than ever, quoting one long-time Bush friend as saying "there's no creativity" from the campaign, no energy and "I get the impression those people have just given up."

White House spokesman Mar-

tin Fitzwater brushed aside the report, saying the current period was "kind of the lull before the fight."

Meanwhile, Texas billionaire Ross Perot told thousands of volunteers that their maverick campaign to put him in the White House has confounded the pundits who had expected them to "wilt like morning glories."

From a livestock pavilion in a Florida fairground, he spoke to 6,000 elderly but widely enthusiastic supporters here Friday and to thousands more hooked up by closed-circuit television in five other states.

The mix of down-home populism and high technology purchased with his immense wealth was vintage Perot. His undeclared candidacy for the U.S. presidency has made the 1992 contest a three-way race, at least for now.

Signature drives have placed the Texas businessman on the Nov. 3 ballot in 10 states, and volunteers are trying to collect the signatures to place him on the other 40.

"Political pros still don't know what hit them. I'd like to keep selling the morning glory theory that you're going to wilt and go away, but the facts are your numbers are growing."

"The enthusiasm is growing and again, in just plain Texas talk — they ain't seen nothin' yet," he said, taking a line from former President Ronald Reagan.

COLUMN 800001

Armenia unveils first post-Soviet postage stamp

MOSCOW (R) — The former Soviet Republic of Armenia Friday unveiled its first postage stamp, decked out in the new country's national colours. Local journalists in the capital Yerevan said President Levon Ter-Petrossian posted the first letter addressed to Armenian Church leader Vazgen I. "This marks one of the first steps toward independence," said Mr. Ter-Petrossian, who led the tiny transcaucasian republic to separate statehood with the fall of the Soviet Union last December. The winning design, chosen from among 420 proposals submitted by Armenian artists, featured Mount Ararat and the national tricolour of red, blue and orange.

El Greco painting fetches new record figure

LONDON (R) — A painting by El Greco was sold for £1.87 million (\$3.42 million) at an auction of Spanish art works by the 15th century artist. The Disrobing of Christ was one of the highlights of the sale at Christie's and surpassed the previous £1.5 million (\$2.74 million) record for an El Greco painting set in 1990. But two other works, by Goya and Zurbarán, that had been expected to reach high prices failed to sell.

Prague news agency — elections? what elections?

PRAGUE (R) — Campaigning has frequently been low-key for Czechoslovakia's June 5-6 elections, but this was ridiculous. The Czechoslovak news agency CSTK Friday published a schedule of events for next week. A long list of seminars, news conferences and other important matters concluded: "Friday June 5 to Sunday June 7: No events have been announced so far."

Europe's biggest sandcastle built on Dutch beach

SCHEVENINGEN, Netherlands (R) — Europe's biggest sandcastle was completed on a Dutch beach Friday by 35 pioneering sand sculptors. The huge edifice, towering 12.5 metres (41 feet) over the promenade at Scheveningen, took more than a week to carve out of 4,500 tonnes of wet sand. The project leader, professional sand sculptor Gerry Kirk of California, reckons there is a worldwide craze for sandcastle building. "There are more sandcastles being built and more contests being organised than ever before," he said. Two-year-old Kirk helped the world's biggest sandcastle — 17.1 metres (56 feet) high in Kasada, Japan, at cost of \$386,000.

Fergie, Andrew get away from it all in Balmoral

BALMORAL, Scotland (R) — Britain's Prince Andrew and his estranged wife the Duchess of York began a weekend break together at the royal estate of Balmoral, fuelling media speculation about a possible reconciliation. The prince, Queen Elizabeth's second son, joined his wife and their two young children at the Scottish country estate, where the couple will have the opportunity to discuss their affairs in private and draw up plans for the future. The trip will give Prince Andrew access to daughters Beatrice, three, and Eugenie, two, who now live with their mother in a rented mansion near the couple's marital home west of London. Some of Britain's news media billed the holiday as a "make or break" weekend in which the duke and duchess may decide to make a fresh start with their six-year marriage.

Hangman's memorabilia sold in London auction

LONDON (R) — A miscellany collection of memorabilia from hangman who executed some of Britain's most notorious criminals went under the auctioneer's hammer in London Friday for more than £25,000 (\$45,600). Albert Pierrepoint's execution bed, which recorded all his hangings, fetched £19,800 pounds (\$36,160) at a "crime and punishment" auction at Christie's. Pierrepoint was Britain's chief executioner for 25 years until he retired in 1956.